LTAC Survey of Distance Education and Learning Technologies

2015-16 Final Report

Prepared by

Patrick Pluscht

University of North Texas

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Introduction

Last year, under the aegis of the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board's Learning Technology Advisory Committee (LTAC) public institutions of higher education in Texas were surveyed on issues related to learning technologies and distance education. The LTAC, composed of nearly two dozen representatives from two-year and four year institutions including health science centers across Texas, assists the Coordinating Board through substantive policy research on and discussion of the increasingly important role that learning technology plays in Texas higher education.

The survey was designed to gain a better understanding of online education and the use of learning technologies in higher education in Texas and to promote opportunities for broader collaboration across Texas institutions and systems.

The survey, which was developed and refined by LTAC members and validated by the Coordinating Board Data Collection Subcommittee, collected information on the following topics: learning technology solutions, institutional policy, best practices, regulatory compliance issues, and areas for further study. In April 2015, the survey link was sent to Chief Academic Officers and Chief Instructional Officers of Texas public institutions with a request to have the survey completed by the individual at their institution who manages distance education operations and/or learning technologies. Participation in the survey was voluntary. 46% of Texas public institutions of higher education participated. An attempt to garner participation from Independent Colleges and Universities of Texas (ICUT) Schools only generated an additional 7 responses (of 38 possible). Those responses were added to the responses from public institutions and are included in this report. A list of all 57 colleges and universities who participated is provided. The Dallas Community College District provided once response for it 7 individually-accredited colleges.

This study is not related to any legislative request, agency inquiry, or dissertation research, but rather is an effort by institutional distance learning and learning technology leaders to collect and share information with their peers to improve distance education and the use of learning technologies for student success.

Special thanks to Dr. Lynette O'Keefe, Dr. Sunay Palsole, and Dr. Kevin Eason for their contributions to this report.

Executive Summary

The survey data provide insights into current aspects of online learning and the use of learning technologies and also point to areas for further study. The data indicate that most institutions support a similar path for online course development and course delivery lifecycle that starts with faculty selection and training and focuses on continuous, iterative improvement. Most institutions (74%) indicate that they require some level of training for faculty to teach online. This training typically comprises LMS training (93%), pedagogical training (69%), and to a lesser degree ADA training (47%) though this may be subsumed in one of the other broader categories in some instances. Most institutions report reviewing online courses for design quality (74%) and accessibility (51%). Less than a third of institutions report an incentive mechanism for instructors to teach online (32%) or for programs that develop or offer online courses (21%). This may indicate the mainstreaming of online delivery, but it would be helpful to revisit this in a subsequent study to establish directionality of this trend.

Academic integrity continues to be of concern at most institutions with 98% of the respondents reporting the current use of a plagiarism detection tool. While a majority of the institutions (56%) reported providing secure testing options, these options were predominantly site-based rather than remote. When proctored exams were used to reduce cheating, the cost of these solutions were most often paid for by students via direct purchase and to a much lesser degree via a mandatory student fee with institutional purchase falling in between the student-paid options. Students in online courses are well supported with access to advising, library services, tutoring, and writing centers. In addition, more than 50% of the institutions reported using some form of self-assessment for students to gauge an individual's readiness for online learning though very few require it. Though a third of institutions were not using nor investigating predictive analytics tools for online courses, nearly 39% of institutions were currently using LMS-centric analytics or third-party services with the remaining 28% of institutions currently investigating these solutions.

While lowering the cost of a college degree has been a hot topic nationally, the use of OER (open educational resources) seems to be largely restricted to the individual efforts of faculty with only 7% of institutions reporting a centrally-coordinated initiative. Regarding special textbook initiatives, there were as many institutions exploring possibilities (32%) as those without a specific initiative. Nearly half of the institutions identified the adoption of e-textbook titles as part of their efforts to lower textbook costs.

Since the survey was conducted, Texas joined NC-SARA (National Council on State Authorization and Reciprocity Agreements) which provided an avenue for institutions to address much of the uncertainty and overhead associated with offering 100% online programs and courses outside of Texas. However, new federal regulations have been introduced that, if enacted, may require increased effort from institutions to remain in compliance when delivering online courses in other states.

Key areas that will likely need more attention from institutions in coming years are ensuring the accessibility of online courses, examining administrative structures to more quickly respond to market demand and flexible delivery models, and developing funding models and collaborative partnerships that will sustain the technical and personnel structure needed to deliver high-quality courses in an increasingly complex regulatory environment.

List of Participating Colleges and Universities

Angelina College
Austin Community College
Blinn College
Brazosport College
Central Texas College
Clarendon College
Dallas County Community College District –
    Brookhaven, Cedar Valley, Mountain View,
    Richland, Eastfield, El Centro, Northlake College
Grayson College
Houston Community College
Kilgore College
Lamar Institute of Technology
Lamar University
Laredo Community College
Lone Star College
Midland College
Midwestern State University
North Central Texas College
Northeast Lakeview College - ACCD
Northwest Vista College
Palo Alto College
Panola College
Paris Junior College
Prairie View A&M University
Sam Houston State University
San Antonio College
San Jacinto College
South Plains College
Southwestern Assemblies of God University
St. Edward's University
St. Philip's College
Temple College

Texarkana College
Texas A&M University
Texas A&M University-Commerce
Texas A&M University-San Antonio
Texas State Technical College (TSTC) West Texas
Texas State Technical College Harlingen
Texas State Technical College Waco
Texas State University
Texas Tech University
Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center
Texas Wesleyan University
Texas Woman's University
The University of Texas at Dallas
The University of Texas at San Antonio
The University of Texas Medical Branch
The University of Texas-Pan American
Trinity University
Trinity Valley Community College
Tyler Jr. College
University of Houston - Victoria
University of North Texas
University of North Texas at Dallas
University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio
University of Texas of the Permian Basin
Vernon College
Wayland Baptist University

Question 1: What LMS do you use to deliver online courses?

Learning Management System

LMS	Value
Blackboard	31
Canvas	14
Moodle	8
Desire2Learn	5
Sakai	2
Moodle Rooms	2
Publisher Provided (MyMathLab)	1
Jenzabar LMS	1
eCollege/Pearson Learning Studio	1
Angel	0

- Four respondents indicated that they were using both Blackboard and Canvas.
- The Sakai, Moodlerooms, and Jenzabar LMS and MyMathLabs were write-in responses.
- No one indicated they were currently using Angel.

Question 2: What plagiarism prevention tool(s) are used at your institution for writing assignments?

Plagiariam Prevention Tool

Tool	Value
TurnItIn	40
Safe Assign	21
Other	4
None	1

- One respondent indicated they were in negotiations with TurnItIn because of dissatisfaction with SafeAssign.
- One respondent noted integrated LTIs within Canvas (PlagScan and Unplag) were being used.

Question 3: Does your institution use secure online testing or proctoring software of services?

Secure Testing Options

Option	Value
Respondus Lockdown Browser	36
On-campus Testing Center	31
Respondus Monitor	17
Other	13
ProctorU	9
None	8
Examsoft	8
Adopting within 12 Months	7
Software Secure - Securexam Browser	2
Examity	2
Software Secure Remote Proctor	1
Kryterion	0

- More than 50% of respondents were using Respondus Lockdown Browser or an On-Campus Testing Center.
- Other options that were identified in the text responses included Questionmark Perception, Smarter Proctoring, Tegrity Test Proctor, BioSig ID, ProctorFree, Voice Proctor, and Off-campus Testing Centers.

Question 4: If you use an external exam proctoring service, who pays for the service?

Who Pays for Secure Testing?

- One respondent indicated that if it was through the institution's testing center, it was no cost to the student. However, if the student choose an external option, the students pays.
- One respondent indicated it wasn't yet decided, but it's being proposed that the current DE Fee collected for fully-online courses would cover the cost of secure testing.

Question 5: How are you creating, storing, and disseminating course-related videos? Please mention any vendors, services, or in-house processes you are using.

- The most popular source for video dissemination was YouTube which was listed by 22 respondents.
- LTIs, especially for Canvas, were noted as storage and dissemination tools by 16 respondents.
- Other popular responses were Vimeo (8), Kaltura (8), and Camtasia (7).

Question 6: What web-conferencing tools are you using for either courses or productivity?

Synchronous Collaboration Tool

Tool	Value
Blackboard Collaborate	25
Other	17
Adobe Connect	16
Microsoft Lync	15
Google Hangout	14
Citrix GotoMeeting/GotoTraining	13
Webex	12
Big Blue Button	8
Zoom	6
None	3
Adopting within 12 Months	2

- 78% of respondents were using Blackboard Collaborate and/or Adobe Connect.
- Blue Jeans Network and Skype were the most popular write-in options.
- One respondent indicated that their online course model is asynchronous, not live.

Question 7: What ePortfolio tools are you using for either student or faculty evaluation?

ePortfolio

Tool	Value
Other	19
None	14
Blackboard Content	13
TK20	8
Adopting within 12 Months	7
TaskStream	4
FolioTek	2
Mahara	2
LiveText	2

- Roughly 1/3 of the "other" responses mentioned the Canvas ePortfolio feature indicating it should have been an option on the survey.

Question 8: Is your institution or are individual faculty using open (free) education course materials?

OER Usage

Category	Value
Some individual faculty use	40
No	17
An institutionally-coordinated strategic initiative	4

(Horizontal axis: 0, 10, 20, 30, 40, 50)

- YouTube, Khan Academy, OpenStax, and LTIs within Canvas were the most common write-in responses to this question.
- Very few institutions have a strategic approach to promoting wider OER usage.

Question 9: Does your institution offer incentives for faculty to teach online?

Faculty Incentives to Teach Online

- Among the 32% of respondents who said their institutions offer incentives, the most common incentives were stipends for course development rather than instructional delivery.
- One respondent noted a higher pay scale for online instruction and two others noted reductions in faculty load for teaching online courses. Two additional responses indicated developmental credit for online instruction.
- One respondent indicated that additional pay for development and delivery of online courses was expected to be discontinued due to online teaching becoming mainstreamed and budget constraints.

Question 10: Do you have special funding models that provide incentives to departments for developing and offering online courses and programs?

Funding Models for Online Courses and Programs

- Most of the funding models involved paying subject matter experts for developing online courses or completing Quality Matters training/certification.
- Three respondents specifically mentioned revenue sharing with departments or the targeting of courses that contribute to a full program or market-oriented certificates.

Question 11: Who owns the majority of online courses at your institution?

Ownership of Online Courseware

- Nearly all of the write-in responses supported the notion that the institution and the faculty share ownership and several of them went on to underscore the importance of preserving access to online courseware if a faculty member departs abruptly.

Question 12: Do you have any restrictions on who can teach online (e.g., part-time vs. full-time instructors) at your institution?

Restrictions for Teaching Online

- 11 of 19 respondents indicated required training or internal certification is required before a faculty member can teach an online course
- Only four respondents made any mention of full-time status and only one indicated it is a requirement for teaching online.

Question 13: Are your tuition or fee structures different for online courses?

The Cost of Online Courses Compared to Face-to-face Courses

More expensive
42%

The same
49%

Less expensive
9%

Question 14: Do you offer online courses in an accelerated format within the long semesters?

Length of Accelerated Online Courses

Category	Value
6-8 week sessions	32
No	18
3-5 weeks sessions	14
9-12 week sessions	9
13+ week sessions	7
Adopting within 12 months	3

0   5   10   15   20   25   30   35

Question 15: Do you require faculty to complete training to teach online courses?

Training Requirements to Teach Online

Question 16: How many hours are required of each type?

- The majority of respondents (n=9) from institutions where training is required mandate 1-4 hours of LMS training.
- Seven respondents noted required pedagogy training, ranging from 2-40 hours with no consensus on requirements.
- Six respondents specified "other" required training ranging from 0-52 hours (primarily 4-12 hours with an outlier of 52).
- Five respondents indicated that an hour or more of Accessibility (ADA) Training was required and three others indicated accessibility was addressed in their LMS or Quality Matters training.
- Other areas of required training included copyright, library literacy, and classroom management though most of the write-in responses fell into the course design category.

Question 17: Do you require this type of training?

**Percentage of Specific Training Required by An Institution
(of those who have some required training)**

Training Type	Percentage
LMS Training	93%
Pedagogy Training	69%
Other Training	48%
Accessibility (ADA) Training	47%

Question 18: Is this training available online?

Percentage of Training Available Online

Training Type	Percentage
LMS Training	83%
Pedagogy Training	80%
Accessibility (ADA) Training	70%
Other Training	50%

Question 19: Do you provide other options for instructors to demonstrate their online teaching proficiency without completing training at your institution?

Options Other than Local Training

- Twelve respondents indicated that their institutions accept external certifications. These included Quality Matters or other similar certifications as well as proof of successful training completion at previous institutions.
- Other common approaches include review of prior experience and online courses taught.
- One community college system only accepts training certifications from other colleges within the system.

Question 20: Who builds your courses?

Online Course Creators

- While 92% report instructors/unique courses, qualitative responses (n=7) suggested a focus on collaboration between faculty and instructional designers as well as work with publishers.

Question 21: Does your institution complete the following types of online course reviews?

Types of Online Course Reviews

	None	Other	Content	Accessibility	Course Design
Number of Institutions	4	19	27	29	42
Percentage of Institutions	7%	33%	47%	51%	74%

- Comments indicate focus on Quality Matters, as well as implementing review methods and metrics similar to those used in F2F courses.
- Many respondents indicated that their online course review methods are being revised and more widely implemented.

Question 22: Do you determine a student's readiness for online learning?

Determining Student Readiness for Online Learning

Response	Count
Yes, we provide a self-assessment option for students.	~29
No, we do not have a specific initiative.	~20
Other	~13
Yes, this is required by the institution before enrollment.	~3

- Voluntary self-assessment is the overwhelming response to this question.

Question 23: How are you providing student services to your students in online courses?

Services Provided to Online Students

	Other	Online Writing Lab	Online Tutoring Service	Online Advising	Digital Librarian
Number of Institutions	21	32	34	41	42
Percentage	37%	56%	60%	72%	74%

- Most respondents noted online or email support and technical helpdesks as other services provided.
- One respondent mentioned an online orientation.

Question 24: How are accessibility issues for online content in your courses addressed for students with disabilities?

- Overall, respondents indicated that there are not set procedures or policies for addressing accessibility in online courses. Respondents primarily indicated that students must contact campus ADA and instructors are responsible for implementing accessibility measures. Some respondents noted a basic level of accommodations provided in each course such as closed captioning and image title tagging.
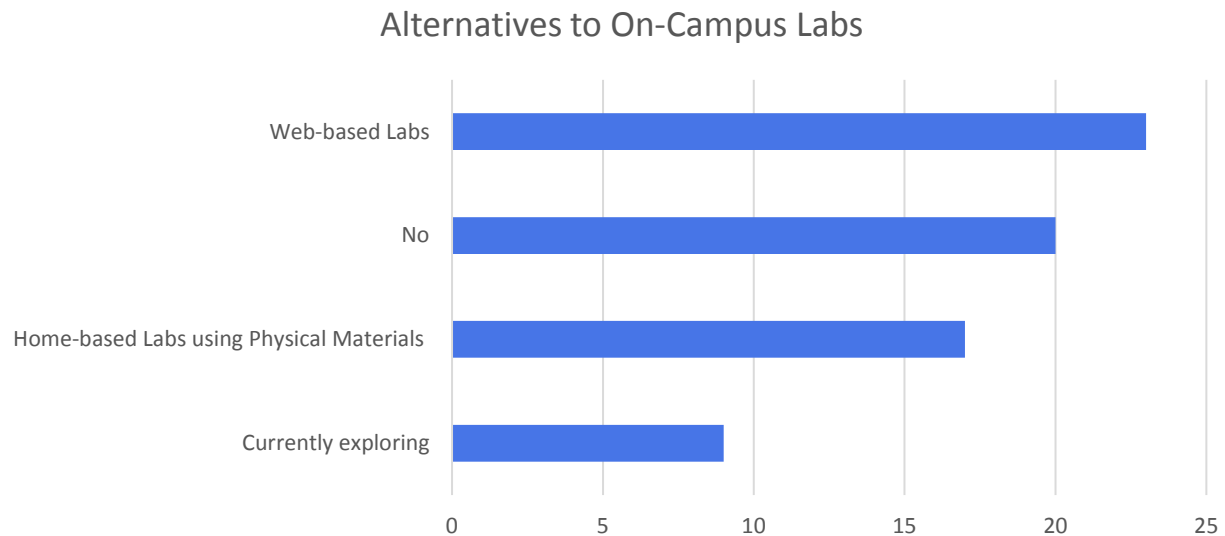- Some respondents noted that LMS compliance with ADA is a primary measure of accessibility.
- One college indicated a clear process for prioritizing online accessibility issues.
- This issue seems be ripe for discovery, discussion, and implementation of best practices.

Question 25: What is the biggest single distance education challenge you are facing?

- Challenges noted by respondents fall into six themes:
  - Faculty development
  - Accessibility
  - Administrative and faculty support
  - Funding
  - State authorization
  - Quality/perception of quality
- One respondent noted that bandwidth availability for rural students remains a large concern.

Question 26: Are you offering any online or home-based science labs? If so, in what disciplines (e.g., Biology, Chemistry, Physics) and what products/services are you using to deliver these?

Alternatives to On-Campus Labs

- Geology and Biology are most popular subject areas for this type of delivery.
- Pearson (MyLabs) is a common provider along with other individual publishers.
- Home-based labs are commonly developed by the instructor.

Question 27: Are you involved in conversations about special initiatives including e-textbooks with publishers or the campus bookstore to lower textbook costs?

Special Textbooks Initiatives

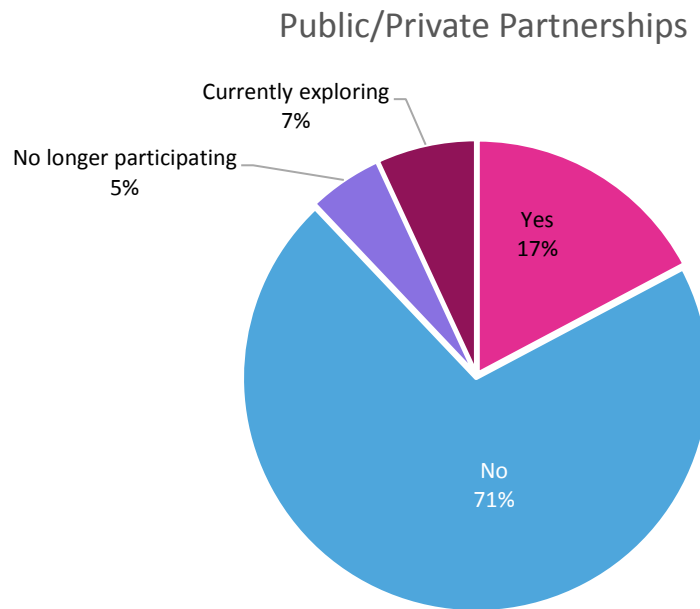|	Other	Print Textbooks	Custom Content (curation) using publisher materials	Open Educational Resources-OER	No	Currently Exploring	e-Textbooks
Number of Institutions	6	10	13	13	18	18	28
Percentage	11%	18%	23%	23%	32%	32%	49%

- Common course textbook adoption is a popular method, and many respondents also indicated bundling/negotiating with publishers for discounted pricing, textbook rentals, and OpenStax as current methods for cost reduction.
- Library resources/copies of materials is also common, but respondents do not indicate how available these items are or how often these resources are used by online enrollees.

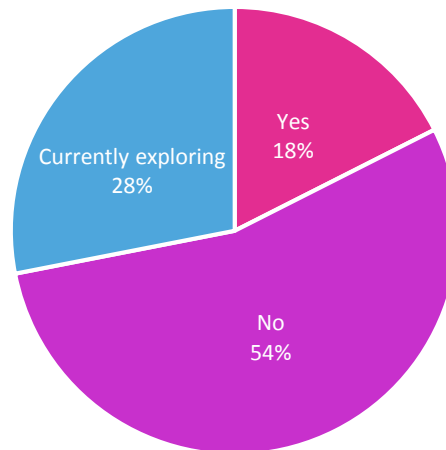Question 28: Are you participating in public/private partnerships for online course and program development and delivery including partnerships with publishers?

Public/Private Partnerships

- The majority of respondents indicated that they are not involved in this type of initiative.
- Those that are working on partnerships are partnered through their LMS, through publishers, and through the TxVSN.

Question 29: Does your institution have a competency-based education initiative for degree seekers?

Competency-based Education Initiatives

- Predominately, no. However, a few respondents indicated limited initiatives for specific programs such as IT and BAAS.

Question 30: Are you using predictive learning analytics in your online courses and programs?

Predictive Learning Analytics Tool for Online Courses

- Most respondents are either not using predictive analytics or are currently exploring options. A few respondents indicated Civitas or other proprietary products that are under consideration or currently in limited use.

Question 31: Beyond secure login and password, how are you addressing the federal requirements for identity verification as described below in the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) standard?
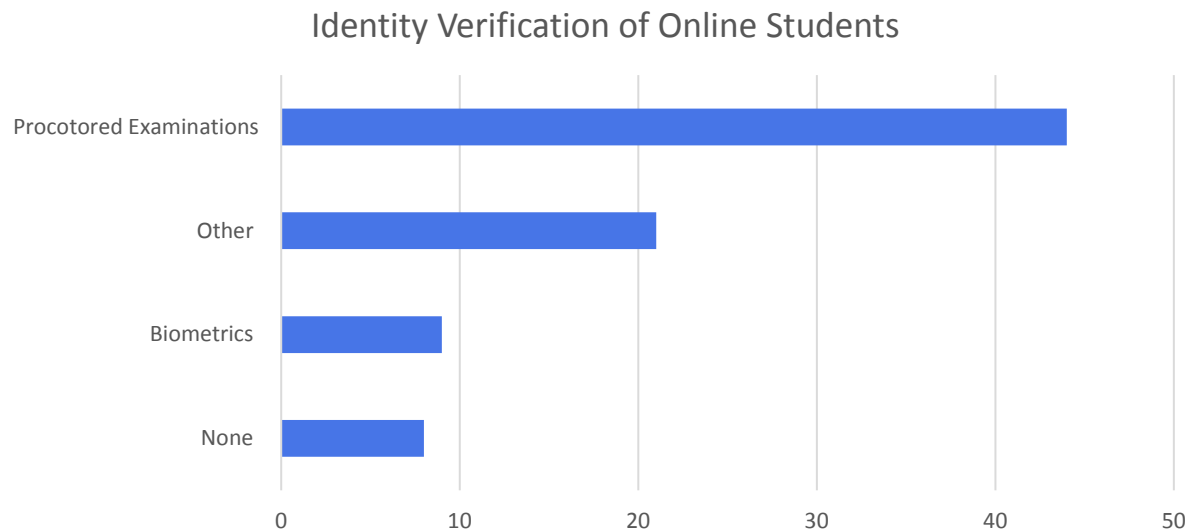
Identity Verification of Online Students

- Overwhelmingly, respondents are using BioSig for biometric measures.
- Other popular choices include proctored or in-person exams, LTIs (especially Canvas), and Respondus services.

Question 32: How are you handling the state authorization requirements if you deliver online courses in other states?

- Overwhelmingly, respondents are delivering online courses in other states in very small numbers. Most respondents indicated that these enrollments are monitored closely and individually.
- 42% of respondents did not deliver courses outside of Texas.
- There is quite a bit of interest in SREB and SARA membership and resources for state authorization.
- Many respondents are aware that this will or may become a larger issue in coming years.

Question 33: In approximately how many states have you either met the authorization requirements or been exempted from them?

- Of the 29 respondents to this question, the average number of states in which an institution was authorized or exempted was 30.

Question 34: What question(s) would you add to this survey if it were administered again next year?

The following questions are based on the questions suggested by survey respondents. The wording may have been changed to improve clarity and consistency and group them into cohesive topic areas.

Note: One respondent advocated ensuring response options other than just yes/no were provided.

Administrative Issues

- Are distance learning operations are your institution centralized or distributed to campuses, deans and departments?

- What types of distance learning modalities does your institution offer?

- What is the current state of growth of online learning at your institution, i.e., has it stayed the same, decreased, or increased?

- What action has your institution taken that has had the largest impact on your distance learning program?

- Is a different tuition/fee schedule used for distance learning courses at your institution? Do tuition/fees vary based on level – undergraduate, graduate, and doctoral? Do tuition/fees vary based on major or program?

- Is your institution part of a nationally-based online certification program, such as Quality Matters or the Online Learning Consortium?

- What distance learning organizations or associations, if any, are your faculty and staff members of?

- What is your institution doing to ensure compliance with ADA requirements?

- What is your institution doing to ensure compliance with copyright requirements?

Programs and Courses

- What online programs are offered at your institution? Differentiate by Associate's, Master's, Doctoral, or other.

- How many online courses are offered at your institution? Differentiate by Associate's, Master's, Doctoral, or other.

- In terms of student enrollments, what are the sizes of your programs and total course enrollments?

- What percentage of your courses and programs are fully online, hybrid, or primarily on-campus with some online components?

Student Issues

- How does your institution characterize low performance in a distance learning class?

- Is low student performance a concern in your online courses and/or programs?

- What guidelines or initiatives does your institution have in place to address low performance in online classes?

- What type of support issues do your students face in accessing online courses, i.e., internet connectivity, availability of computer resources, etc.?

Faculty Issues

- Are faculty members permitted to teach a full-time load of distance learning courses?

- Is ongoing training provided for faculty beyond initial training? If so, it is mandatory?

- Must faculty members be recertified after a certain period of time?

- What technology tools are provided to faculty for internet instruction to ensure it as robust as in-person classes?

- What type of support services are available to faculty during the course development process and as they use instructional technologies?

Course Development and Quality Standards

- What process does your institution use to establish standards in distance and online education?

- Does your institution use rubrics during the online course development process? (a) yes (b) no. If yes, which of the following rubrics do you utilize? (a) Quality Matters, (b) Sloan-C, (c) Blackboard, (d) Institutionally-Developed, (e) Other.

- How many courses and programs are developed using a quality rubric identified above?

- Does your institution utilize course shells or master courses in the development of online courses? If so, is the use of a master course required?

- What guidelines are in place during the course development process to ensure content outline and goal alignment?

- What requirements, if any, does your institution have requiring a faculty member to include live lectures or seminars in his/her online courses?

- What type of support services are available to faculty as they learn to use instructional technologies?

- Does your institution require any mandatory on-campus activities for distance learning courses?

- Are faculty members required to design courses to ensure compatibility with mobile devices?

- What guidelines does your institution have in place to ensure continual course improvement?

- After the initial offering, how often and to what extent are courses reviewed for currency and quality? If this is done, who completes the course review – the faculty member himself/herself, an outside faculty member/instructional designer/administrator, or a team?

Technology

- Does your institution provide a direct link to the LMS or do students need to log into a portal to gain access to the LMS?

- What kind of web-based tools does your institution use for competency based education?

- Are technology budgets adequate to support a successful distance learning program?