

# Perspectives

Community College  
Leadership for the  
21st Century

APRIL 2017

[www.ferris.edu/alliance](http://www.ferris.edu/alliance)

*If delivered well, online education provides a richer and more interactive classroom, allows students to develop a set of sophisticated virtual communication skills, and utilizes the power of multimedia to help students remember what they learn.*

- Lila Romero

*New online learning technologies are shifting the debate from a zero-sum comparison of the merits of online versus face-to-face instruction to something more valuable: a discussion on how best to integrate new teaching methods into the educational process.*

- Hans Johnson,  
Marisol Cuellar Mejia,  
and Kevin Cook

**Doctorate in  
Community College  
Leadership**

**Empowering graduates  
to advance  
community colleges  
towards excellence  
and community  
responsiveness through  
exemplary leadership.**


**FERRIS STATE  
UNIVERSITY**

**ENROLLING NOW FOR  
THE NEXT COHORT**

## More than Mainstream, Distance Learning is a River of Change

### Carol Spalding, EdD

President

Rowan-Cabarrus Community College  
Salisbury, North Carolina

Before I dive into the subject of distance learning (DL) and specifically online learning, I am reminded that faculty make the difference in any form of teaching. Good face-to-face teachers make good online teachers. Good teachers trained in the sophistication of a different andragogy with rich technology will make the student learning experience the same or better quality than a face-to-face class. In fact, nationally, 94% of students report that their online courses are equivalent or superior to traditional courses.

In my experience, the development of DL and online full degree programs has been an important catalyst for change and improvement in access and in teaching and learning in my colleges and others. The DL field has been highly scrutinized and criticized, as well as regulated, researched, and evaluated. The Department of Education and accrediting agencies have all weighed in and continue to do so.

Over the past 25 years, the impact of federal policy, accreditation, and union contracts have impacted the growth of online programs. Many of these challenges have been resolved, such as the approval of Pell grants for full-time online degree programs, the accreditation standards that address the equivalency of student services for online students, and the negotiation of union contracts.

---

***In my experience, the development of DL and online full degree programs has been an important catalyst for change and improvement in access and in teaching and learning...***

---

There are always some issues on the horizon. At this time, we have to deal with state authorization reciprocal agreements (SARA) that impede out of state registration in online courses and Open Educational Resources (OER) to name a few.

There have been DL fads (MOOCS) and frauds (financial aid scams) that make the headlines as well. DL has had a difficult go of it. When fully online programs qualified for Pell grants, the DL growth accelerated and has continued, driven by student demand and supplied by colleges, universities, and continuing education of every type. DL, Internet, online – whatever the name – is not going away. In fact, its growth has continued even in recent years during the college enrollment declines.

My perspectives on distance learning have been influenced by personal experience as the first Open Campus President of Florida Community College at Jacksonville, now Florida State College at Jacksonville, where we developed a large distance learning organization, and my current experience as

president of Rowan-Cabarrus Community College in North Carolina that has a growing DL program and has won the Top Ten Digital Colleges distinction. My national view has been influenced through my membership in the Instructional Technology Council (ITC), an affiliate council of American Association of Community Colleges, as well as service on the AACC Board.

I became involved with the ITC early in my career and have served on its board for the last decade. ITC board member, Fred Lokken from Truckee Meadows Community College in Nevada, started conducting survey research to find out what was happening in the field so ITC could better serve its member colleges. The survey began in 2004 and has over eleven years of research documenting the evolving practice of distance education. The reports can be found on the ITC website and I recommend you read the recent report to fill in the many areas I will not address in this article.

**The basics and beyond.** Some colleges have developed their online programs through what I call the cottage industry approach. Each faculty owns their version of freshman English, for example. I prefer DL programs that have developed master course shells that follow the state's curriculum frameworks. Because of Florida's higher education common course numbering system and exemplary transfer system, the Open Campus was able to implement the master course structure and resolve the issue of faculty intellectual property and ownership. Colleges own any master courses and usually pay faculty for the development or modification to online formats by stipends or release time.

In the early years, there were many learning management systems (LMS) and faculty wanted to choose their favorite. It was traumatic to change learning management systems because of all the rework that each faculty had to do on every course. We went through this painful exercise more than once. Students were disadvantaged having to navigate more than one LMS, so we worked to influence the administration to choose just one LMS. Fortunately, the issue resolved itself because the market took the choices away; the dominant LMS (Blackboard) bought the competition.

In North Carolina, colleges have more than one choice of LMS even though the NC system provides Blackboard (Bb) for all 58 community colleges. Based on the success we had in Jacksonville with a single LMS, at Rowan-Cabarrus we use one because we want the students to be challenged by the subject matter and not the software.

Online teaching requires new skills that carry over to the face-to-face classroom. The demands for proof of quality have generated training that enhances teaching in general and a cadre of practitioners who improve instructional design. The technology and learning management system course "shells" have provided colleges with the infrastructure for reporting grades, monitoring quality, and reporting student evaluations. We use our LMS technology in every course section at Rowan-Cabarrus.

*(continued on page 4)*

## EMERGING LEADERS' PERSPECTIVES

Since the emergence of online instruction over two decades ago, community colleges increasingly have recognized the value of online learning as an important mode of instruction, one which can greatly improve student access to higher education. Although first deemed somewhat controversial and often relegated to the technology department, perceptions are changing and today online learning is moving into the mainstream at many community colleges. We posed the following question to emerging and national leaders. Their answers appear below.

### Amy Kaminski, MEd

Licensing & Acquisitions Specialist/  
Continuing Education Instructor  
Harper College  
Palatine, Illinois

Historically, education has always been used as a tool in which communities prepare their youth for the working world. In the early twentieth century, education was aimed at teaching students basic skills, which would help prepare them for the assembly line workforce. Today, most traditional community college classrooms are stuck in the 19th and 20th century educational design format, teaching basic skills. However, the majority of the workforce is no longer found in a Ford Motor Company automotive assembly line; rather they are found managing complex computer systems and working with global partners (Kalantzis and Cope, 2008).

Instead of focusing primarily on skills that can be easily searched for on the Internet, our students should have the opportunity to gain knowledge and understanding of how to perform effectively in a global workforce. This includes developing soft skills, an understanding of how to work in dynamic and remote teams, and a tolerance and appreciation for other countries and cultures.

Online courses provide the community college populace with the opportunity to start to reinvent education and provide a more globalized educational experience. The 21st century students can be seen walking around campus with their heads bent over while staring at their mobile devices. This generation of students has the expectation that their information will be delivered ubiquitously. This means the expectation is for information to be readily available on their mobile device, communication in electronic format, and for learning to occur seamlessly throughout their daily lives.

For decades scholars have identified distance learning as an important area for development within community colleges. With the increased access for students to the Internet and in turn global exposure to knowledge, students are expecting a customized ubiquitous learning experience where campus-based interactions can be the hub for each student's learning opportunities. The question is, with so many industry leaders over so many years identifying the need to move towards a more ubiquitous learning environment, why have community colleges been so slow to make the change?

Going forward, community colleges would be wise to continuously monitor and address the educational needs of their 21st century students. By providing these students with a variety of learning opportunities and digital classroom environments, community colleges will be doing their part to help prepare the communities' youth for the demands of our global workforce.

#### Reference

Kalantzis, M., & Cope, B. (2008). *New learning: Elements of a science of education*. Port Melbourne, Vic.: Cambridge University Press.

#### QUESTION OF THE MONTH:

**Going forward, what role will online courses and programs play in community colleges?**

**[T]he focus on distance education is beginning to shift from an emphasis on flexibility and access to one of retention and success.**

### Tammy Douglas, MA

Director of Learning Technology  
Kellogg Community College  
Kalamazoo, Michigan

Distance education has continued to evolve over the years, from paper-based correspondence courses and technology-enabled delivery to full-fledged gaming systems and globally connected learning

spaces in which students and faculty can explore and engage, but what has remained consistent is student interest in the distance education modality. While the open access nature of community college attracts a wide range of learners, research on student success rates indicate the online modality may not be the best fit for every student. However, improved technologies have allowed the online option to become more robust, offering innovative design options utilizing adaptive and individualized learning, integrated technologies, and personalized educational options.

With increased emphasis on performance-based funding and retention, the focus on distance education is beginning to shift from an emphasis on flexibility and access to one of retention and success.

While some institutions are looking at success in terms of a face-to-face comparison to online, others are using a multitude of data points such as faculty and student preparation, technology skills and comfort, course structure and alignment, consistency, intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, perseverance, and expectations.

The online modality presents an additional set of challenges to the teaching equation, so many institutions are now requiring faculty to complete some type of online certification prior to teaching online classes. These challenges, if not managed effectively, can lead to frustration for both the faculty and students. Anecdotally, through employment within the university and the community college environments, faculty have commented that upon completing online teaching certification they end up revising not only their online content, but also their face-to-face content. Similarly, many intuitions also require students to complete an online orientation to help them understand the technology and the self-motivated nature of online education. Both online teaching certifications and student orientations are evolving into teaching and learning strategies. Research shows that basic instructional design principles and student study skills both increase student success.

As distance education continues to advance, research and funding models indicate an increased focus on student success. The challenge is how to use the technology comfortably and effectively to create a clear and easy-to-follow course structure with connections between faculty and students. While technology can play an important role, we must be careful that we do not allow ourselves to become distracted by all the possibilities to the detriment of fundamental instructional design principles. Good pedagogical practices are timeless.

**Amy Kaminski, MEd**, is the Licensing & Acquisitions Specialist and a Continuing Education Instructor at Harper College. During her eight years of corporate IT experience, Amy had the opportunity to spend four years at Apple Inc., where she gained the experience necessary to become an Apple Certified Technician and Trainer. She holds the MEd from the University of Illinois and is currently pursuing her doctorate in the Ferris State University DCCL program.



**Tammy Douglas** is Director of Learning Technologies at Kellogg Community College, where she oversees distance education and chairs the Online Course Development Committee. Tammy is also tasked with the development, implementation, and support of a strategic vision for advancing learning and emerging technologies related to instructional, programmatic, and curricular design. She earned her MA from Western Michigan University and is pursuing her doctorate in the Ferris State University DCCL program.



## NATIONAL LEADER PERSPECTIVE

Since the emergence of online instruction over two decades ago, community colleges increasingly have recognized the value of online learning as an important mode of instruction, one which can greatly improve student access to higher education. Although first deemed somewhat controversial and often relegated to the technology department, perceptions are changing and today online learning is moving into the mainstream at many community colleges. We posed the following question to emerging and national leaders. Their answers appear below.

### Online Learning: Higher Education's Paradigm Shift

#### Ronda Edwards

Executive Director  
Michigan Colleges Online  
Lansing, Michigan

and

#### Fred Lokken

Professor, Political Science  
Truckee Meadows Community College  
Reno, Nevada

Online education represents a significant paradigm shift in the history of higher education. In the last two decades, online education has significantly challenged the traditional model of instruction and launched a modality appropriate for a more technology-based 21st century, broke down the state-by-state "silo" structure of higher education, and prompted educators to explore new methods for teaching, learning, and communicating.

The Instructional Technology Council (ITC), an affiliated council of the American Association of Community Colleges (AACCC), represents higher education institutions in the United States and Canada that use distance learning technologies.

In the fall of 2004, the ITC created the annual eLearning survey in response to the growing need for national data related to eLearning program creation and development, as well as to track key issues impacting faculty and students.

From the twelve years of survey results, it is clear that online education has moved from the side office to a more influential role within the institution. We will discuss three trends from the ITC survey where the online program has – and will continue – to influence college policies and procedures in the coming years.

#### Increased expansion of virtual student services for all students within the institution.

In the beginning, it was important that colleges paid attention to the services they were providing online students. Community college students choose an online option for the flexibility it provides them to access higher education while working and attending to family responsibilities. In the initial offerings of online courses, students were required to complete required orientations, register and pay for classes, and access their textbooks, etc., by coming to campus. This truly defeated the purpose of offering online courses and programs, so colleges began bridging the silos between departments and developing methods to provide those services online. Many virtual student services were initially developed to assist the online student, but are seen as a required service now for any college student.

#### Lead the efforts in accessibility – for the entire institution.

Since ITC began asking survey participants about the accessibility of their online courses in 2008, survey respondents have expressed a remarkable decline in their confidence for whether their online courses adequately comply with Section 504 and Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. The 2015 survey results found 43 percent of respondents felt their courses were either "mostly" or "fully" compliant with Federal requirements. For 2016, 37

#### QUESTION OF THE MONTH:

*Going forward,  
what role will online  
courses and programs  
play in community  
colleges?*

percent report that level of confidence, which is a new low for confidence in compliance.

The turning point centers on the June 2010 "Dear Colleague" letter issued by the US Department of Justice and the US Department of Education to college presidents. The letter questioned whether electronic book readers are accessible to students who are blind or have low vision. The letter made an unexpectedly broad statement indicating that issues associated with electronic book readers extended

to all instructional technologies. Confidence has been eroded further by a series of highly visible lawsuits filed by the American Council for the Blind. Students now decide which sections of classes they take and that means ALL classes, regardless of their modality of delivery, need to be ready to actively support a blind student. While accessibility was initially viewed as an issue to be addressed with online offerings, clearly this is and will be something that every college must address throughout the institution.

#### Address the issue of affordability.

With the introduction of technology in education came the ability to openly share the knowledge. Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) became one of the first institutions of higher education to share their instructional content freely on the internet in 2001. That began what is now referred to as the Open Educational Resources (OER) movement. OERs are defined as accessible, openly-formatted, and licensed materials and media that educators use for teaching, learning, assessment, and research purposes. OER initiatives on many campuses started with the online courses and programs

as good pedagogy – providing students access to course materials at the beginning of the semester within their courses at no additional cost.

In 2012, the ITC survey added questions on the use of open educational resources (OERs) at community colleges. Based on five years of data, it is apparent that some progress is being made

to explore, create, and adopt OER materials. In 2016, over half (57%) of the institutions anticipate that OER will have a significant impact on the entire institution. That said, clearly challenges remain, including lack of faculty awareness and time needed to locate and evaluate resources. The use of OER is moving the conversation from the online course to the discipline level and all indications are that this is another online trend that will become a campus-wide initiative in the future.

**[I]t is clear that online education has moved from the side office to a more influential role within the institution.**

**Ronda Edwards** is the Executive Director for Michigan Colleges Online where she provides project leadership and works with community colleges in support of their distance learning options and the sharing of courses and students statewide. This includes implementation of strategic plans and policies, and coordinating the offering of courses and programs, faculty/staff training programs, academic support services, and assessment activities. Ronda is a member of the Instructional Technology Council (ITC) and is co-chair of the ITC Leadership Academy held annually.



**Fred Lokken** is a tenured professor of Political Science at Truckee Meadows Community College in Reno, Nevada, and previously served as Dean of TMCC WebCollege and Academic Support Center. As a member of the Instructional Technology Council (ITC) Board of Directors, he has conducted the ITC national survey since 2008. He also chairs the ITC Public Policy committee and was appointed commissioner to Western Interstate Compact for Higher Education (WICHE) by Governor Sandoval/Nevada in July 2015.



**QUICK TAKES**

**Highlights from the Field**

**The evolution of distance learning**

by the Editors of InsideHigherEd

As distance learning becomes more “normal,” today’s students are enrolling online in record numbers. Yet online education is changing dramatically. Online programs are evolving and creating demands for thinking about teaching, learning, and the economics of higher education in new ways. This compilation of news articles explores new trends and strategies being used in higher education today as a new generation of distance learning programs is created and develops.

Access this work here: <http://bit.ly/2nJQmGE>

**Thoughts from higher education leaders: Challenges and emerging trends in higher education**

by UPCEA and NASPA

Online programs are present at most colleges, with many programs having grown organically out of academic units. Today online learning is a strategic imperative with leaders beginning to centralize strategic decision making around these programs. The primary drivers of this centralization include risk, efficiency, and quality. This report summarizes the opinions and advice of those leading the efforts on how to develop an effective online learning strategy.

Access this work here: <http://bit.ly/2pdX0ln>



Alliance for Community College Excellence in Practice

Published by the Alliance for Community College Excellence in Practice, Ferris State University, Doctorate in Community College Leadership Big Rapids, Michigan

**EDITORIAL STAFF**

Jeanne Bonner, PhD, Editor  
Mara Jevera Fulmer, EdD, MFA, Design & Production Editor

To send comments or receive a copy of this publication, please contact us at: [ccallian@fsu.edu](mailto:ccallian@fsu.edu)

**More than Mainstream, Distance Learning is a River of Change.** (continued from page 1)

We require an online training course for all faculty and provided paid training several years ago for online teaching and for Quality Matters training to assure our courses were up to standards. We require students to demonstrate their ability to navigate online or we recommend a training program for them.

**Learning outcomes will be the coin of the realm, as instruction becomes more competency-based.**

**Surprises: Growth.** We were surprised when the Open Campus DL enrollments grew to be the largest of the five campuses at the beginning of the 21st century. Nationally, we were surprised again when distance learning enrollment increases became “meteoric” and the dominant source of enrollment growth at colleges and universities nationally between 2004 and 2011. We were surprised at Rowan-Cabarrus as online registrations grew from 34% to 40% from Fall 2015 to Spring 2017, making the Virtual Campus the largest of our five campuses this year.

**Surprises: Faculty.** We were surprised when the faculty reported that their best students were their distance-learning students. We were not surprised that faculty who did not teach online thought that online education was inferior and tried to stop distance-learning growth. We were not surprised that by having faculty teach both face-to-face and online as part of their regular loads, we could assure quality and support in both modalities.

We were surprised that students and faculty work harder in online courses compared to face-to-face classes. In a face-to-face class, the teacher asks a question and one student answers it. Online, all students answer every question. Faculty can check and see if students have logged in, done their homework and passed their quizzes. With the advent of eBooks, teachers can see how much time each student spends on each page of the text and if they have opened and played the videos in preparation for their tests.

We were not surprised to see that completion rates were less than face-to-face classes in the early years. Many students were not prepared for the course work or the technology and failed to begin assignments. We are surprised to find that twenty years later the successful completion rate (A-C) is still 8% worse than face-to-face. We were surprised to find that students registered for online courses as a first choice, debunking the myth that students take online courses if they cannot schedule a face-to-face class.

**What does the future hold?** I expect online education to continue to improve and grow, though not at the meteoric rates of the past ten years. Online courses are likely to be the major source of increasing enrollment as digital natives choose online over traditional course formats for all or part of their college experience.

Since 2015, my college has not offered any truly traditional classes. All of them are required to have a Blackboard shell where students submit their assignments via integrated email. I believe other colleges will follow in this approach. Students will choose hybrid courses and demand more flexible formats than our current course design of 16 weeks with “windows” for assignment deadlines.

The adoption of eBooks will be faster than we think and cause great disruption in colleges. The eBooks are cheaper, lighter, capable of being highlighted and modified by the instructor, and have infinite patience as students work through the content. Students will continue to expect their photos

to turn into videos and their quizzes to give them instant feedback. Our English faculty adopted eBooks in less than a year! When a few students complained there were no traditional courses with books to choose for their English classes, we responded by making printed copies as supplements.

In the future, colleges will not have to provide computer labs, as students will bring their own affordable devices. Wi-Fi will be ubiquitous and students will attend colleges based on bandwidth and technology, as well as degree programs offered entirely online. Mobile phones will continue to make education accessible. ADA issues will be overcome through software solutions. Faculty will use tools such as Skype and webinar software to hold office hours (synchronously) as a way to connect with students personally online. Tutoring and learning resources will be 24/7. (They already are.)

There will be many new approaches to online learning, such as gamification, artificial intelligence, and virtual reality. Learning outcomes will be the coin of the realm, as instruction becomes more competency-based. Analytics will help students, faculty, and staff better understand how to improve learning.

Many competing institutions will offer online learning and colleges will grant credit for credentials earned in the workplace from “Toyota University” and the like. Continuing education for professionals will continue to be provided online for free to medical, real estate, and law professionals among others. The days of CEU conferences in Las Vegas are numbered.

**Perhaps then distance learning will take its rightful place as not just the dominant choice for students, but the quality choice as well.**

**Finally.** Surely in the next few years we will have worked through the issues of student authentication, reciprocal agreements, retention, and online course legitimacy. Perhaps then distance learning will take its rightful place as not just the dominant choice for students, but the quality choice as well.



**Dr. Carol Spalding** is President of Rowan-Cabarrus Community College. Rowan-Cabarrus has an annual budget of \$90 million and serves over 20,000 students annually at seven major locations spread across Cabarrus and Rowan Counties in North Carolina, including the nation’s most advanced community college biotechnology facility located at the North Carolina Research Campus in Kannapolis.

A graduate of Columbia University, Doctorate; Pepperdine University, Masters in Human Resources; and the University of Louisville, Bachelors’ in International Studies, Spalding has also participated in specialty studies at The American Leadership Forum, The Aspen Institute Executive Seminar, and the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard.

Spalding serves on the Board of Directors of the Instructional Technology Council (ITC), the community college national organization coordinating the use of electronically facilitated and distance learning across America. Additionally, she serves on the Centralina Workforce Development Board of Directors. Spalding previously served on the Board of Directors of the American Association of Community Colleges, the RowanWorks Economic Development Commission, and the Cabarrus Regional Chamber of Commerce.