Accountability: The Latest (and Greatest) Challenge for Online Learning?

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The eLearning Revolution

- Overall Percent of Schools Identifying Online Education as a Critical Long-Term Strategy Has Grown from 49% in 2003 to 56% In 2005
- Overall Online Enrollment Increased from 1.98 Million in 2003 to 2.35 Million in 2004
- In 2005, Only 31% of Chief Academic Officers Believed that Their Faculty Fully Accept the Value and Legitimacy of Online Education
- Moving Away from Comparative Studies (or Are We?)
  - Growing by Degrees: Online Education in the United States, 2005 (Sloan-C)
“We want postsecondary institutions to adapt to a world altered by technology, changing demographics and globalization, in which the higher-education landscape includes new providers and new paradigms, from for-profit universities to distance learning.”

“Only 66 percent of full-time four-year college students complete a baccalaureate degree within six years. (This reflects the percentage of students who begin full-time in four-year institutions and graduate within six years.)”
• UT Academic Institution Presidents Charged with Aligning Institutional Policies to Maximize Their Positive Impact on Graduation Rates

• UT Academic Institution Presidents Developed Specific Targets Last April to Meet or Exceed National Averages for Four-Year, Five-Year, and Six-Year Graduation Rates for Full-Time, Part-Time, and Transfer Students
A Semi-Serious Question

- Presidents Are Feeling the Challenge Regarding Improvement of Graduation Rates

- The UT TeleCampus Continues to See Substantial Enrollment Growth Across the UT System

- One President Asks…

  “Will Your Online Courses Help Me with Student Engagement and Graduation Rates?”
TeleCampus Survey

- Sent to Students Who Had Taken One or More Undergrad GenEd Courses Through the TeleCampus
- ~2500 Recipients, 241 Responses
- Survey Asked About Personal Experiences and Motivations

(continued)
TeleCampus Survey (continued)

- Convenience a Primary Reason Students Opt for Online (76.6%)
  - 27.1% Prefer Online to On-Campus

- Most Respondents
  - Are 24 Years Old or Older (69.3%)
  - Are Female (72.2%)
  - Have Attended More Than 1 Institution (79.6%)

- Progress to Graduation
  - 15.8% Used Online Courses to Speed Progress
  - 53% Say Online Helped Them Stay on Schedule

(continued)
TeleCampus Survey (continued)

• Most Respondents Not Traditionally Engaged on Campus
  ❖ Little Participation in Organized Social or Athletic Groups

• Most Are Good Students
  ❖ 76.1% Have 3.0 GPA or Better

• Online Courses Were Harder Than They Thought
Broader Surveys

• Collaboration among NCHEMS, SREB, UT TeleCampus

• Investigating Perceptions and Motivations About the Role of Online Learning in Student Engagement with Institutions and Progress to Degree

(continued)
Broader Surveys (continued)

• **Key Questions**
  - Role of Online in Institutional Mission
  - Does Online Have an Effect on Graduation Rate?
  - Will It Have an Effect in the Future?

• **Search for Evidence**
  - What Types of Evidence Support Perceptions?
  - Share Evidence?
Broader Surveys (continued)

- Two Separate Surveys with Similar Questions (Underway)
  - Institution Leaders
    - SREB Effort
    - Sloan-C Effort
  - Students
    - Reliance on Institutions to Administer Surveys
Additional Data Gathering and Analysis Planned

• Work With Several Campuses That Feed Students Through the UT Telecampus
  - Gather Student Unit Record Data
  - Create Model For Determining The Extent To Which Online Learning May Or May Not Influence Student Progress To Degree And Graduation

• Expand To Other Postsecondary Institutions
  - Must Have Student Unit Record Systems That Record Student Enrollment And Grades For Online Courses As Well As Traditional Courses
SREB’s Interest in Accountability

- Encouraging State Policy Leaders to Ask the Right Questions
- Laying Out the Facts…
- Reporting on Findings Annually
- Creating and Aligning Data Systems to Allow for Real Analysis and Assessments
Holding Colleges and Universities Accountable for Meeting State Needs

Available in pdf from www.sreb.org, then click on Challenge to Lead Goals

2006

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CHALLENGE TO LEAD SERIES
The Questions

• Do Sufficient Numbers of First-Year Students Graduate from State Institutions?

• Are Graduation Rates Improving?

• Are Different Groups of Students Graduating at Different Rates?

• Are Investments in Postsecondary Education Paying Off?

• Is Online Learning Making a Difference?
The Backdrop in the South

Increases in Number of Degrees Awarded in SREB States Outpaces the Nation, but:

- Too Few Complete Degrees in 150 Percent of Normal Program Time
- Too Many Students Leave After Their First Year
- Minority Student Awards Are Growing but Lag
- Student “Swirl” Is Undocumented (and at Present Can’t Be Tracked)
Online Learning in the Mix

• SREB’s Commitment to Increasing Access Using Technology/Online Learning Is Working

• Sloan C Report “Growing by Degrees” (Southern Edition) Indicates:
  - SREB States Growing at Rates Higher than National Rates (18.2%)
  - SREB Institutions Are More Positive About Online Learning and Importance in the Future
  - Almost Two-Thirds of SREB Institutions Offer Some Form of Online Learning, with Growing Number Offering Complete Degree Programs
But No “Hard” Supportive Data

• Is Online Learning Reaching Students We Would not Otherwise Serve?

• Is Online Learning Helping Students Reach Their Degree Goals?
  ❖ Get Ahead, Catch Up or Get Courses They Need

• Is the Investment in Technology Paying Dividends?

• How Can We Make a Stronger Case?
Framing the Public Agenda

- Kentucky “Model” Is A Helpful One
- They Raise Five Central Questions, Have Specific Indicators And Outline Benefits
- Most Importantly, These Are Not Internal Questions That Are Not Reported On But Public Questions, Reported On Regularly And Driving Policy Directions And Funding
Kentucky’s Five Questions

- Are More Kentuckians Ready For Postsecondary Education?
- Is Kentucky Postsecondary Education Affordable For Its Citizens?
- Do More Kentuckians Have Certificates And Degrees?
- Are College Graduates Prepared For Life And Work In Kentucky?
- Are Kentucky’s People, Communities And Economy Benefiting?
Available in PDF from www.cpe.ky.gov, then click on “Kentucky’s Public Agenda in Postsecondary and Adult Education, 2005-2010”
An Important Effort

• The Current Study and Survey Effort Is Viewed as an Initial Step to Answering These and Other Important Questions

• We Need to Move Beyond “No Significant Difference” and Start to Document Our Efforts and the Value of Online Learning (and to Head Off the Accountability Challenge Which Is Fast Approaching…)}