Pittsburg State University  
Distance Education Plan, 2013-15

Pittsburg State University (PSU) continues to be successful in offering distance-delivered educational programs. Out of the various modes that deliver distance education, the online offerings at PSU have undergone a significant change over the past ten years. The following statements have served to guide the development and delivery of online programs and they will guide future activities as well:

- Decisions regarding growth and expansion of online learning opportunities are to be based on the culture and mission of the university.
- Online course offerings provide students in traditionally delivered programs flexibility when they encounter schedule conflicts, seek to add additional majors and minors, or seek to accelerate a program.
- A complete online path for general education requirements should exist.
- All students should ideally have at least one learning experience in fully online environment, recognizing that this will position them well for future learning expectations of employers and graduate programs.
- The university is committed to high-quality instruction regardless of the mode of delivery.
- The academic deans in consultation with faculty and department chairs will continue to identify appropriate courses and degree programs that can be successfully delivered fully online.
- Consideration will be given to those programs which expand the influence of Pittsburg State University as well as addressing particular workforce needs.

Like all campuses, PSU has been challenged by the fast-paced changes in online and distance-delivered educational programs. We continue to rely on program faculty and department chairpersons to determine which programs may be appropriately suited for online delivery. This grassroots based and deliberate approach to program development ensures faculty ownership, mirrors the development of traditionally delivered programs, and makes it more likely that resources and policies will evolve as needed. It is widely understood that PSU must be more aggressive in moving forward in this new, highly competitive delivery area. Resources and strategies have been re-allocated and developed to support expansion in online delivery.

Current Programs Offered Online (Year Approved)  
Master of Engineering Technology (February 2006)  
Master of Science with a Major in Educational Leadership (February 2006)  
Master of Science with a Major in Educational Technology (February 2006)  
Master of Science with a Major in Health, Human Performance and Recreation (February 2010)  
Master of Science with a Major in Reading and an Emphasis in Reading Specialist or Classroom Reading Teacher (February 2010)  
Master of Science with a Major in Teaching and an Emphasis in English for Speakers of Other Languages (February 2010)  
Master of Arts with a Major in History (February 2010)  
Master of Science with a Major in Human Resource Development (March 2010)
Master of Arts with a Major in Teaching (Special Education Licensure) (May 2012)
Master of Science with a Major in Special Education Teaching (May 2012)

Bachelor of Science in Nursing with a Major in Nursing (RN to BSN Track) (February 2006)
Bachelor of Science with a Major in Workforce Development (Completion Program) (May 2011)

Academic
The teaching, administrative oversight, scheduling and student admission and support for distance learning courses are the same as for all on-campus courses. Faculty and students use our central data and communication system, GUS, to support distance and on-campus courses. Within GUS, students apply for admission, courses are scheduled, students can enroll, mid-term and final grades are submitted, transcripts and degree audits are available and petitions for graduation are completed. Whether the student is located on campus in a residence hall room or in another country, students have access to their records. Additionally, Canvas is used as the learning management system for face-to-face and online courses.

The Higher Learning Commission (HLC) has approved PSU to determine the programs to be offered through distance education without prior approval from HLC. It is our responsibility to notify HLC each year if we add a program to our online offerings. Departments are required to submit a request to offer a program online through departmental and college level curriculum committees and then to the Faculty Senate or Graduate Council for approval.

Online courses are scheduled using the on-campus, approved academic calendar and are monitored by the University Registrar. Academic departments are responsible for course quality, evaluation, hiring faculty, and accreditation. All of the courses offered online are developed by PSU faculty and no course content is purchased. Full time PSU faculty teach the majority of the courses with a small percentage taught by ongoing adjunct instructors. Programs offered online are reviewed using the same guidelines as other programs during program review. PSU is currently working on revising the process and guidelines for our academic program review. These new guidelines will insure that online programs have the same assessment expectations as on-campus programs.

PSU used the KBOR Policy Manual definition of a distance education course, as specified in Appendix F, as a guideline when creating the definition of an online course and a hybrid course. PSU’s definition of an online course is a course that provides 100% of the instruction (course material, discussion and evaluation) online through the learning management system and does not require attendance in a physical classroom. A hybrid course provides a minimum of 50%, but not more than 99%, of the instruction (course material, discussion and evaluation) online through the learning management system. At least one face-to-face class meeting is required.
Fiscal Control
PSU annually schedules committee hearings to determine the tuition and associated fees in preparation to be submitted to the Kansas Board of Regents for approval. Tuition rates are the same for distance education courses as for on-campus courses. Fees are charged for distance education courses as listed on the PSU Graduate and Undergraduate Student Fee Schedule. Tuition collected is incorporated into the general administration funds that are managed by the Vice President for Administration and Campus Life. Distance education courses are assessed Media Instructional and Continuing Studies Area Fees. These fees are collected and become a part of the Graduate and Continuing Studies Department’s budget. These fees are used to support some online courses, faculty stipends, professional development for faculty and to market distance education programs.

Faculty
The majority of faculty teaching distance education courses are either tenured or on tenure-track, or on annual contract. Payment for teaching, workload, faculty evaluation and intellectual freedom for online courses are articulated in the PSU/KNEA contract agreement. Salary payments are covered under Section XX (page 55) of the agreement. Other Provisions and all other issues follow the basic contract.

The Center for Teaching, Learning, and Technology provides ongoing professional development activities focused on improving the use of Canvas and other available software for online courses as well as best practices in general curriculum delivery. The Center has added instructional designers who assist faculty in course development and provide training for online course delivery. An e-Learning Academy was established in the spring of 2012 that will more specifically define and categorize faculty professional development activities. Faculty earn professional development funds through participation in these activities as well as providing evidence of incorporation of new skills into courses. The e-Learning Academy will provide professional development for a group of faculty each year to design or redesign an online course to meet the nationally recognized Quality Matters standards. They will also receive training and support for improving the facilitation and delivery of an online course.

Legal
Legal issues that are beyond the PSU/KNEA contract agreement are addressed in conjunction with the university attorney. Copyright agreements and meeting the needs of students with disabilities are two major issues that must be addressed. Discussions will be initiated with the university attorney and the chief information officer to determine the parameters that must be established as well as how to assess and evaluate individual courses in meeting requirements.

Students
All students who need academic support services are directed to use services such as career services, computer assistance, and library support either by telephone, email submission or direct contact. Currently, we have two undergraduate completion degrees
Online services are now available at the Writing Center as well as some evening hours. Tutoring for select general education classes is also available through Tutor.com for our students. As we add additional undergraduate programs online, we will continue to evaluate our support programs to insure students have access to resources for college success.

Technical
Distance Learning at Pittsburg State University is handled through quality of service (QOS) protocol, which means that distance education is considered the most important data on campus and given first priority on the University network. Our internet connection is supplied through the Kansas Research and Education Network (KanREN). This level of high bandwidth allows large amounts of data to travel from one point to another very efficiently, resulting in the ability for PSU students and faculty to communicate via video and other media-rich file formats that are larger in size than typical data files. All networking devices that support distance learning and other data is on a rotation schedule of maintenance that ensures high reliability and robust delivery of distance learning. The Canvas Learning Management System server is housed off-site and all data is backed up daily to ensure access for all students and faculty in the event of inclement weather or disaster recovery issues. Support services for faculty and staff are provided through the Office of Information Services and The Center for Teaching Learning and Technology and technical support staff is assigned to each academic college.

Budgeting
The resources to develop and offer online courses are financed by revenues available from the individual academic department, Graduate and Continuing Studies (GCS) and the summer salaries budget. The cost of maintaining and/or upgrading technical support is budgeted through departments offering online courses and programs. The GCS budget includes fees collected from area and media fees for online courses. This budget will help support the development of the courses. A plan to provide professional development dollars to faculty involved in E-Learning Academy was established in spring 2012. Departments offering online degree programs that have additional enrollment can request additional funding from GCS to support courses for expanded enrollment. The infrastructure is managed and budgeted by the Office of Information Systems (OIS).

Goals for 2013-15
As we increase the number of online courses and program offerings, we are continuing to strengthen the infrastructure for sustaining and advancing distance education. In the next two years, PSU has identified the following issues to advance:

1. Assessment: A policy document “PSU Program Review Process” is available online at Office of Analysis, Planning, and Assessment. A process to insure that online courses are compatible with the PSU Program Review document and meeting assessment guidelines established by HLC best practices will be reviewed by faculty and administrators.

2. Professional Development: To meet the Quality Matters standards, professional
development for a group of faculty will be provided each year to design or redesign an online course through the E-Learning Academy. Also, this group will be provided training and support for improving the facilitation and delivery of an online course.

3. Planning: Another four online courses to provide a pathway for students to complete general education requirements through online delivery will be developed. We will identify two additional undergraduate or graduate programs to target for online delivery. We will also explore whether the entire summer course schedule could be offered with online classes, and, if not, make a determination on the balance between online and other type of classes.

4. Student Resources: Services for online students will be enhanced by adding web-based support for undergraduate students and extending hours for one-on-one assistance. Also, we will develop a pre-course that will provide students with information on the computer requirements and skills to successfully complete a course online as well as offer examples of assignments. This will assist in determining a student’s ability to successfully complete the course or program.

5. Legal Issues: Guidelines will be established by which each course must meet copyright laws and how to accommodate students with disabilities. We will also create a structure that addresses the issue of out-of-state authorization to offer online courses for their students.