Chapter 16
How to be a Transnational Distance Learning Winner

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ABSTRACT

Transnational Distance Learning (TDL) holds great promise for universities that are able to capitalize on the emerging market. This chapter discusses strategic planning, operations, and how to maximize opportunities and minimize risk. Vision and mission determine its design and place within the organizational structure. The chapter discusses various approaches for course design, pedagogy, faculty selection, and program management. Techniques to promote acceptance and reduce program costs are discussed. Other topics are testing and evaluation in the virtual classroom, business models, faculty recruitment, and marketing strategies to increase enrollment and profitability. Traditional university management practices need to be reinvented to ensure success in the distance learning market; methods used by for-profit universities are offered as examples. The chapter reviews distance-learning, teaching-learning models, faculty recruitment and training, quality assurance, international partnerships, and accreditation.

INTRODUCTION

The reader will notice that most of the literature cited in this chapter is post 2005, because the rapid evolution of educational technology and online teaching approaches makes much of the previous literature obsolete. Faculty resistance waned as online classrooms transformed from clunky Learning Management Systems (LMS) into exciting virtual classrooms replete with ebooks, movies, simulations, and Web-based audio and video. University reluctance has diminished as student numbers exploded and research studies demonstrated the quality of online programs. The reality is that many of the reasons online programs were suspect a decade ago no longer exist. The new technology, the demand for more accessible and affordable education, and dormant national economies accompanied by rising educational costs make Transnational Distance Learning (TDL) an attractive and necessary option for universities seeking to increase enrollment and tuition revenue. The chapter focus is practical--How To implement TDL. The Transnational Distance-

Learning Readiness (IQ) Test (Appendix) gauges your readiness to go global.

The reality for universities is the need to be more competitive in the ever-tightening higher education market. These skills include how to do TDL, how to manage and market it, and how to deal with accreditors and foreign entities. The accreditation issues are at the time this book was written that no for-profit university would submit or review a chapter An accreditation organization did write a chapter but had to withdraw lest it be seen as a conflict of interest. The transnational distance learning market will offer great opportunities, but it will also expand the number of world-class players vying for students. Students will shop for quality, convenience, and guarantees that your university's degree will improve their employment and academic opportunities.

In the TDL classroom, national borders offer no protection. The new market drivers are price and product. Those universities that can deliver the best educational programs at a competitive cost will be the winners. Already the development of online learning in the United States has clearly demonstrated that students are willing to pay for convenience and customer service. The successful TDL universities will deliver both. This chapter discusses ways for universities to be successful in transnational distance learning.

A university offering transnational distance-learning programs must provide for three student needs. The first is respect for cultural diversity. The second is understanding student learning-style preferences. The third student need is a classroom that never sleeps. Global teaching is 24 hours per day, as is technical support and student support services. Universities must be prepared to offer technical support and counseling services 24 hours per day, 7 days per week with most holidays included. Moreover, the services must be multilingual, customer oriented, and sensitive to cultural differences.

Prior to launching a transnational distance-learning operation, traditional universities need to understand business approaches that have worked. This chapter describes business methods used by for-profit universities to develop and manage successful online programs. Traditional universities that study for-profit models can adapt their techniques to make their own online programs successful. The for-profits utilize faculty-recruitment, course-delivery, marketing, and course-management techniques that have proven effective.

In the transnational arena, targeted marketing of multilingual programs will be part of doing business. The opportunities are unlimited, but the competition will be fierce. Successful TDL universities will have strong business plans and methods. If the university is to have global reach, the cost of doing business 24 hours a day will be significant. In the transnational distance-learning arena, the student can shop internationally without leaving home. Therefore a TDL university based in one country must support its enrollment goals by attracting international students. At one time, a student had to decide what local university to attend. TDL extends the available choices so that students will be able to decide what country to attend.

Prior to transnational distance learning, the main university concerns were local/foreign tuition, sufficient dormitory space, classroom facilities, and sports. More and more universities are discovering that they can never provide sufficient physical facilities to meet the ever-increasing demand for higher education and professional development. The new challenges for universities will be international partnerships, global acceptance of their degrees, and tracking international exchange rates that affect the cost of an education. Given the choice of earning a master's degree in the United States for $35,000 versus one in China for a third that price, smart shoppers will look for the best bargain. Universities wishing to enter the transnational distance learning market must understand the realities. More than that, they must be able to adapt their organizational

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