Chapter 7
Project Realities:
Shifting Course Delivery Method

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Meeting the demands of students who expect convenience, affordability, and a quality education has required that institutions of higher learning find ways to offer programs in multiple delivery modes. Blended or hybrid course delivery requiring course meetings both on campus and online is a growing model that addresses institutional challenges of classroom availability, technology use in courses, improvement of four-year graduation rates when more courses are offered, and flexibility in attendance through multiple course delivery options. This case study describes an institutional strategic initiative, the Summer Hybrid Academy, which supported faculty members in the transition from campus-based classroom courses to technology-infused hybrid courses. Year One of the Academy was planned without using a project management approach, and Year Two was offered with a project management approach that improved results.

ORGANIZATION BACKGROUND

Founded in 1969, the University of Texas at San Antonio (UTSA) has evolved from a teaching institution serving the needs of the South Texas community to a research-intensive university reaching a global audience through eight colleges offering 133 degree programs including 66 at the Bachelor's level, 51 at the Master's

level, 24 at the Doctoral level, and 18 Graduate Certificate programs. UTSA has three campuses in the San Antonio metropolitan area. The total student population is just over 30,000, 60% of which are classified as minority. Historically, UTSA has served non-traditional students including first generation college attendees (53%), returning adults (41.2% of students are 23 are older), and part-time students (24.6%). Growth has accelerated in the past decade as the student population increased by 10,000 (30%). This growth has necessitated careful allocation of resources and planning to support both student educational needs and academic research functions. For example, classroom space has not kept pace with the number of registered students. The typical class size, determined by size of room, is 35 – 60 students; however, larger auditorium courses have increased to accommodate the need for more courses. Space Usage Efficiency (SUE), a calculation by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, indicates that UTSA has the highest overall score and highest classroom score in 2011 among four-year institutions in the State (Space Usage Efficiency, 2011).

SETTING THE STAGE

Growth coupled with budget restrictions have resulted in an increased reliance on technology solutions for efficient processes, expedited communication, and instructional support. The UTSA Strategic Plan 2016 specified the addition of alternative delivery methods and the expansion of the use of technology to enhance instruction as two key initiatives to support improved institutional processes. The Office of Information Technology (OIT) provides the vast majority of technology for the campus. The OIT mission is aligned with the academic mission of the University, therefore the unit reports to the Provost's Office rather than Business Affairs where such a department often resides. The Online Learning unit is a part of the OIT supporting the academic use of technology for teaching and learning. The Online Learning unit was the group responsible for the project described in this case.

Another driver to utilize technology has been a priority by the University of Texas System to lower attrition rates and improve four-year graduation rates. Blended or hybrid courses were identified as a strategy linked with student satisfaction and higher rates of retention. Pontes and Pontes (2012) looked at a nationally representative sample of 113,500 postsecondary undergraduate students and found that first generation students from low-income households were "less likely to have an enrollment gap" if those students were enrolled in distance education courses. There is also evidence that hybrid classes can increase student engagement for all students (Moskal, Dzuiban, & Hartman, 2010). Moreover, a survey of 562 instructors, instructional designers, and administrators (Bonk, Kim, & Zeng, 2005) found

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