Chapter 16

Moving Your College toward Online Programs Including a Quality Matters Implementation Plan

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Moving faculty in a direction toward having online programs/courses at their college can be a daunting task. Another college's example may assist in preparing for online programs with quality online courses that include a Quality Matters Implementation Plan that will help define how the college will expand faculty knowledge of online education instructional design. In a college's transition to online education, it is particularly important to "sell" this idea to faculty members. Faculty members at many institutions may be fearful that they will not meet QM standards when going through a course review. Further, faculty members may be fearful of losing the "boundaries" that they currently have teaching in a face-to face setting. Other concerns revolve around budget constraints, preparing the college for online education, keeping consistency in faculty work duties, training faculty, faculty staying current with technology, keeping the same rigor in the online course as a face-to-face course, including an appropriate level of contact with students, and accreditation needs in order to have online education offered at the college. Management and organizational needs include having an administration team that supports faculty in making the change from a face-to-face class to an online class.

ORGANIZATION BACKGROUND

Anoka Technical College ("ATC") is a two-year technical college located in Anoka, Minnesota (Northern suburb of the Minneapolis/St. Paul area) that offers more than 35 technical career certificates, diplomas, and associate degrees in many technical and paraprofessional fields. The college has about 2,000 students a year with 60% female and 40% male. The campus currently serves mainly underrepresented students, including students of color, and low-income, non-traditional-aged, and/or first-generation students. The college has a student-to-faculty ratio of 22:1. Some of the unique programs are "broadcast captioning, judicial reporting, occupational therapy assistant, golf course grounds management, health information technology, multimedia and gaming information technology" ("Anoka Technical College - History and Facts," 2013).

ATC instructors belong to a strong union comprised of faculty from Minnesota's public, two-year colleges. The union currently has "3,700+ members located at 30 colleges (46 campuses and sites) throughout Minnesota" ("Minnesota State College Faculty – About MSCF," 2013). I have been with the college since 2002, first teaching face-to-face courses in the Legal Administrative Assistant Program and now teaching online/hybrid courses. I am the department chair of the program and oversee curriculum changes, advising students, marketing the program, and performing program/course assessment. Also, my job entails being the chairperson for the online committee for our college. In the spring of 2012, I became the first Quality Matters' Master Reviewer for the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities.

SETTING THE STAGE

In a technical college, classes are typically taught in a face-to-face setting. Since the inception of online education, some ATC faculty have contemplated how to teach their classes in an online environment. It is a challenge to take a face-to-face course and transfer it into a quality online course. Challenges included lack of funds to hire instructional designers, time constraints to train faculty that were already stretched for time, and knowledge of what constitutes a quality online course.

Because of the college's budget constraints, ATC faculty were not afforded trained instructional designers to assist in the design of quality online courses; therefore, our faculty had to learn, mostly by trial and error, how to create successful online courses. Creating the online course is just the first stage in teaching the course online. There are many factors to take into consideration such as course design, course delivery, course content, institutional infrastructure, learning management software, faculty readiness and student readiness. Even though online faculty were working many

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