

Santa Monica College
Distance Education Program Annual Report
2014-2015

According to a recent report released this past June from the Public Policy Institute (PPI) of California report on successful online courses in California Community Colleges, *“online learning is growing rapidly in higher education. In California, the state’s community colleges have taken the lead, offering thousands of online courses to hundreds of thousands of students. The popularity of online learning is easy to understand. It offers students a convenient way to take college courses when they want, where they want”*. This report addresses some of the components from the PPI report including some of the important indicators of online student success. Many of the PPI recommendations for insuring online student success are initiatives which are already in place or are in the process of implementation at SMC.

The popularity of online education continues to be both a newsmaker as well as the subject of scrutiny in many sectors including the education and business communities. Interest has recently intensified as our state moves further along in creating the California Open Education Initiative (OEI) especially as it addresses online course quality & design and how this relates to student success and persistence in the online classroom.

In terms of popularity, the Santa Monica College Distance Education program mirrors statewide enrollment trends. This is evidenced by what was an exciting, productive and incredibly busy year which is reflected by the largest number of sections offered since the SMC Distance Education program began. It was also a year that included several ambitious new projects tied to online faculty readiness, course design and student success. A new Distance Education faculty readiness training pilot debuted in the Fall of 2014, a Distance Education student satisfaction user survey was created and deployed this past year, and heavy preparation is underway to launch an online student tutoring service pilot in the Fall of 2015. The Distance Education department also supported the launch of multiple eCollege/Pearson Learning Studio enhancement releases and also submitted the six-year program review. A special benefit of having gone through the six-year program review is having access to extensive data from our Office of Institutional Research (OIR). Much of this data, culled from the OIR report as of Spring 2014, will be shared throughout this report.

The Distance Education department continues to support to all academic departments with their online classes. In Fall 2015, the math department will be offering their first online hybrid class with two sections of Math 54, Elementary Statistics. These classes will be a valuable and welcome addition to the online class offerings and certainly respond to student need and demand. The Theatre Arts department is also working with the DE department on addressing distance education faculty readiness as they move to teaching online. To date, over 285 unique online classes have been approved and/or converted for online delivery. Eight new classes were approved for online delivery this past year.

Course Number	Course Title
ECE 51	The Reggio Approach
ECE 52	Documentation Making Learning Visible
ECE 53	Environment as the Third Teacher
ECE 71	Infant & Toddler Education and Care
ENG 49	Asian Mythology
ESL 17	Intermediate Reading Skills
Math 54	Elementary Statistics
Music 37	Music in American Culture

The table below lists the four new-to-online classes which were offered during 2014-2015

New Online Classes 2014-2015

Course Number	Course Title	Year/Semester First Offered
ASTRON 1	Stellar Astronomy	Fall 2014
ACCTG 9	Accounting Ethics	Fall 2014
ECE 51	The Reggio Approach	Spring 2015
ECE 53	Environment as the Third Teacher	Spring 2015

Data & the Year in Numbers

Number of Online Sections Offered by Semester – Four Year Overview

Term	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015
Summer	86	119	112	155
Fall	296	315	335	348
Winter	55	72	72	138
Spring	299	292	338	376
Total	736	798	857	1017

Number of Online Sections by Year – Seven Year Overview

Year	2008-2009	2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015
Sections	950	802	737	736	798	857	1017

2014-2015 Enrollments - Classes hosted on eCollege/Pearson Learning Studio*

Term	Online Classes	Hybrids	eCompanion
Summer 2014	3,767	31	9199
Fall 2014	7,283	655	52,138
Winter 2015	3,391	53	9611
Spring	8,293	815	48,725
Total	22,734	1,554	119,673

*By seat = duplicated enrollments. The seat-counts in the table above represent the majority (@ 97%) of all of our online classes. All but three online classes use eCollege. Music 32 "Appreciation of Music" is offered via a proprietary platform and a few computer science sections each term are hosted on the instructor's website.

College	Fall 2014	FTES FALL 2013	FTES FALL 2012	FTES FALL 2011
American River	1,369	1,283	1,204	1,164
Coastline	1,294	1,162	1,099	1,197
San Joaquin Delta	1,293	1,078	930	1,064
Foothill	1,115	1,072	881	967
Modesto	1,114	931	835	922
Mira Costa	998	861	847	723
Santa Monica	983	952	937	985
Santa Barbara	980	893	827	766
Mt. San Jacinto	809	740	775	809
Rio Hondo	620	731	824	733

*Source: CCCC Datamart – Capturing the Fall 2014 numbers Santa Monica remains among the top 10 largest CCC DE programs using FTES as a marker, SMC moved down to the #7 position, edging out SBCC by 3 FTES. This lower ranking occurred in spite of an increase in class offerings.

Who Are the SMC Online Students?

The data below in tables 1-4 was provided by the Office of Institutional Research (OIR) for the six-year program review in September 2014.

Table 1: Age Range: Fully Online vs. Mixed Schedule

Age Range	Fully Online Schedule	Mixed Schedule*
19 or Younger	6.1%	22.6%
20-24	28.2%	52.8%
25-29	25%	13.4%
30-39	24.9%	7.1%
40-49	10.1%	2.1%
50 or Older	5.7%	3.0%

*Mixed Schedule means students taking a combination of online and on-campus classes

Table 2: Percentage and Count - Gender & Schedule Patterns Fully Online Schedule vs. Mixed/On-Ground & Online Schedule

Gender	Fully Online Schedule	Mixed Schedule	College-Wide
Female	61.0% (1,357)	55.8% (4,834)	52.3% (15,694)
Male	39.0% (886)	44.2% (3,828)	47.7% (14,306)

Table 3: Ethnicity & Schedule Patterns Fully Online Schedule vs. Mixed/On-Ground & Online Schedule

Ethnicity	Fully Online Schedule	Mixed Schedule	College-Wide
Asian/PI	17.1%	19.4%	15.6%
Black	11.3%	7.6%	9.7%
Hispanic	27.0%	25.9%	36.1%
Native Am	0.4%	0.1%	0.3%
White	36.6%	24.6%	28.3%
Multi-Race	4.7%	3.5%	3.7%
Unreported	2.9%	18.9%	7.2%

Table 4: Distance Ed Student Residence Status

Location	Fall 2009	Fall 2010	Fall 2011	Fall 2012	Fall 2013
California	97.2%	97.6%	98.0%	97.8%	82.6% (2122)
Out-of-State	2.3%	2.3%	1.9%	2.0%	6.3% (75)
Foreign	0.5%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	0.2% (26)

Surveying the Online Students

Using the Chancellor’s Office statewide student satisfaction survey as a guide, an in-house SMC Distance Education student survey was authored by the Distance Education Committee and deployed by the OIR in the Spring of 2014. According to the OIR survey results summary, 570 students responded which represents a 5.3% response rate. The OIR confirmed that this was a solid number of participants reaping reliable information on student’s attitudes regarding online learning and rating the value of the platform tools among other measured variables.

In terms of online student satisfaction levels, 73.3% reported being very satisfied with their course. When asked how likely they would be to take another DE course at SMC, 68.5% responded “very likely” with 17.4% responding “likely.”

Other interesting survey findings included:

- 65% of the student survey respondents were taking one online course during spring 2014
- 23% of the student survey respondents were taking two online courses during spring 2014
- 6% of the student survey respondents were taking three online courses during spring 2014
- 7% of the student survey respondents were taking four+ online courses during spring 2014

Of this survey pool, 61% of the respondents identified as having been enrolled in an online class prior to the current term and 39% responded that they had not enrolled in an online course prior to the current term.

Student Retention & Success

According to the Chancellor’s Office data-mart, the gap between student success and retention rates for traditional campus-led classes vs. the online classes continues to narrow. Details on DE vs. face-to-face success and retention rates are reflected in the table below. This includes data available on statewide DE averages. While student success and retention rates for online classes fluctuate over terms and these variables are unknown, rates continue improve.

Student Outcomes	Statewide DE	SMC DE	SMC Non-DE
Retention	80.23%	82.04%	83.46%
Success	60.72%	68.56	67.90%

*Source: CCCC Datamart – fall 2014

Supporting Student Success

While most of our Distance Education students take a combination of online and on-campus classes and therefore spend some time on our campus, institutions which offer online classes are expected to mirror all student services with an online version of that same support. SMC has most student services in place including counseling, financial aid, bookstore and many other services available online, but the missing piece is a formalized resource for online tutoring for DE students. The last accreditation team made the recommendation that SMC bring tutoring support online for our DE students and this began a serious and rather protracted five-year conversation within the Distance Education Committee on how to best address this need.

As the College prepares for the upcoming accreditation visit, it became imperative that the DE committee address this issue and move from the discussion phase adopting a plan for action. The DE Committee recognized this need and this project is currently underway. Using other community colleges as a model, it was determined that outsourcing tutoring services might be a good place to start in the form of a controlled pilot. The DE committee reviewed several tutoring vendors, had vendor presentations and selected SmartThinking as the vendor to pilot this project in the upcoming fall term.

The expectation is that the College community will learn how and to what extent this initiative is embraced by faculty and students. When the fall pilot has concluded, user data and metrics will be reviewed. The College can then decide how to adjust to meet the needs and move forward on providing this student service to DE students and perhaps to all students if it is determined to be effective and is financially feasible.

Serving Our Faculty

The Distance Education department supports both online and on-campus class instruction. The goal is to address technology and pedagogy training needs in order to insure that faculty have the resources necessary not only to make the pedagogical transition from traditional on-campus classes to online teaching, but also to guide them in how to efficiently and comfortably work within the virtual classroom, including their on campus, web-enhanced classes.

After many years absence, the California Community College Chancellor's office (CCCCO) resumed their process of querying all CCCCCO DE faculty via their own user satisfaction survey as of Spring 2014. Santa Monica College opted in as participants and the DE department messaged faculty accordingly about the upcoming survey. The survey was to be deployed to SMC Distance Education faculty directly from the Chancellor's office late spring but this process has been delayed at the state level. As such, the DE faculty await further updates on the CCCCCO statewide DE faculty survey. This survey will be helpful as it will not only be specific to SMC but also provide a state-wide comparison in what should be a comprehensive report on faculty opinions regarding being an online instructor including their use of technology as well as feedback on their institution's course management system and related services.

Course Management System (CMS) Needs Assessment

One of the charges of the Distance Education department has been to stay engaged and current in updates connected to CMS options. As is the case with all technology, this is a rapidly changing field. Some CMS platforms have been subsumed and then "retired" by larger companies, putting user and program stability at risk. For example Blackboard bought both WebCT and Angel, then either retiring or drastically changing these platforms.

Pearson's purchase of eCollege proved a positive move in terms of platform stability while offering upgrades and enhancements to try to stay current. Some new and quite promising course management system competitors have recently come on the horizon. Publishers noting how lucrative online education has become have also jumped on the online learning course management system bandwagon and are offering their own versions of CMS'. Over the years, the DE Program has worked collaboratively with the Distance Education Committee with ongoing discussions and explorations of what other CMS options, if any, might better suit our District. While SMC has been with eCollege for many years, it is critical to remain informed consumers, ever mindful of trends and options which may be looming on the horizon.

During the Spring of 2013, the Distance Education Committee and DE Dept. wanted to learn more about a new Course Management System called "Canvas" by Instructure. This vendor was invited to campus to provide the DE committee and other interested DE faculty a tour of this new CMS. The session was very well attended. The platform was demonstrated and a Q&A session followed the product demo. This vendor visit and demo generated interest among DE committee members to explore this CMS as a possible alternative to eCollege in the future. To keep the momentum going on the exploration of this CMS, the vendor offered to provide DE committee faculty with a "sandbox" or private shell to test the platform at their leisure. The vendor had also offered to provide virtual meetings should the committee have further questions and provide an option to discuss ongoing questions about their product. The serendipitous timing of exploring this specific CMS folded perfectly into what was to take place on a state level in upcoming months in the form of a massive project called the "Open Education Initiative" (OEI).

California Open Education Initiative (OEI)

A relatively new statewide California Community College initiative has been emerging for the past year or so which has impacted SMC's CMS decision-making and falls under the banner of the OEI. According to the OEI website <http://ccconlineed.org/>, "The mission of the California Community Colleges Online Education Initiative is to dramatically increase the number of California Community Colleges (CCC) students who obtain college associate degrees and transfer to four-year colleges each year by providing online courses and services within a statewide CCC Online Education Ecosystem (OEE). Special attention will be given to ensuring retention and success through basic skills support and other support services, especially for underserved and underrepresented cohort groups."

If all goes as planned, participating community colleges should be able to reap many benefits if the current path comes to fruition. One of many objectives of the OEI project was to first identify a single course management system to deliver all coursework. Three finalist CMS' were evaluated; Canvas, Moodle and Blackboard, with Canvas ultimately being selected. With the OEI common CMS identified, the focus and conversation has changed statewide to the migration of content over to Canvas, funding for training faculty on how to use their CMS as well as insuring all coursework meets minimum quality standards via a certification process if classes are delivered on the "Exchange."

Also in the plans is tutoring, test proctoring centers and online test proctoring services as well as impersonation and identity fraud solutions. While there are still several unresolved issues which need to be addressed before this project can be made available to non-pilot institutions, things look quite promising. In preparation for a possible change in CMS' for the District, the Distance Education Committee continued to discuss our options over this past year. With Canvas already a serious consideration for SMC, well before the OEI made their selection, Sal Veas the Distance Education Committee Chair, incoming Chair Pete Morris, and Vice Chair Julie Yarrish have been making numerous presentations to campus stakeholders to keep everyone in the loop on possible changes. In the Spring of 2015, several presentations were made to the Academic Senate and Department Chairs regarding a CMS migration to Canvas.

During the Spring 2015 semester the Distance Education committee weighed the pros and cons of staying with eCollege once the current contract ends. It was determined that after much serious discussion and given the changes in the course management field, eCollege might no longer be the ideal CMS solution for our District. To that end the DE committee issued the following motion at the June 4th meeting: *“Canvas Adoption Motion: In recognition and support of the selection of Canvas as the statewide Online Education Initiative’s common course management system, the Distance Education Committee recommends the adoption of Canvas as Santa Monica College’s course management system, and further recommends that the District begin the process of transitioning to Canvas with all interested parties, including but not limited to the Academic Senate and Faculty Association.”*

To cast a wider net on this possible change, there will be several presentations on Fall Flex day so all campus stakeholders can attend these information sessions. Discussions will continue to focus on how the OEI came to select Canvas and why SMC seems to be moving in the same direction. What remains to be seen is if our current enrollment management system will interface with the state enrollment system so we can insure that if we do migrate, the infrastructure will be in place. The MIS department will provide additional information on this situation before the College proceeds with more details migration mapping and timelines.

Distance Education Faculty Readiness Pilot and Beyond

The Distance Education department, with the guidance and support of the Distance Education Committee, determined that supplementing faculty on-campus training and webinars with more formalized online training might be a benefit. As a result the Chancellor’s Office @ONE group was utilized to fulfill this need (<http://www.onefortraining.org/about>). During the Summer of 2014 and Spring of 2015 a cohort of thirty faculty participated in an exclusive online class titled “How To Teach and Learn Online”. This project, funded by Academic Affairs and the Title V grant, has been met with very positive response from participants. The cohorts included new to online as well as veteran online faculty. Topics centered on effective online practices for student engagement, Distance Education guidelines as well as Title 5 requirements for online classes. To meet the training needs of all faculty using the CMS for their on-campus classes (web-enhanced use of the platform), multiple on-campus trainings were offered on how to use eCompanion and were designed for both beginning and intermediate faculty and led by Christine Miller, the Distance Education Department Multimedia Specialist.

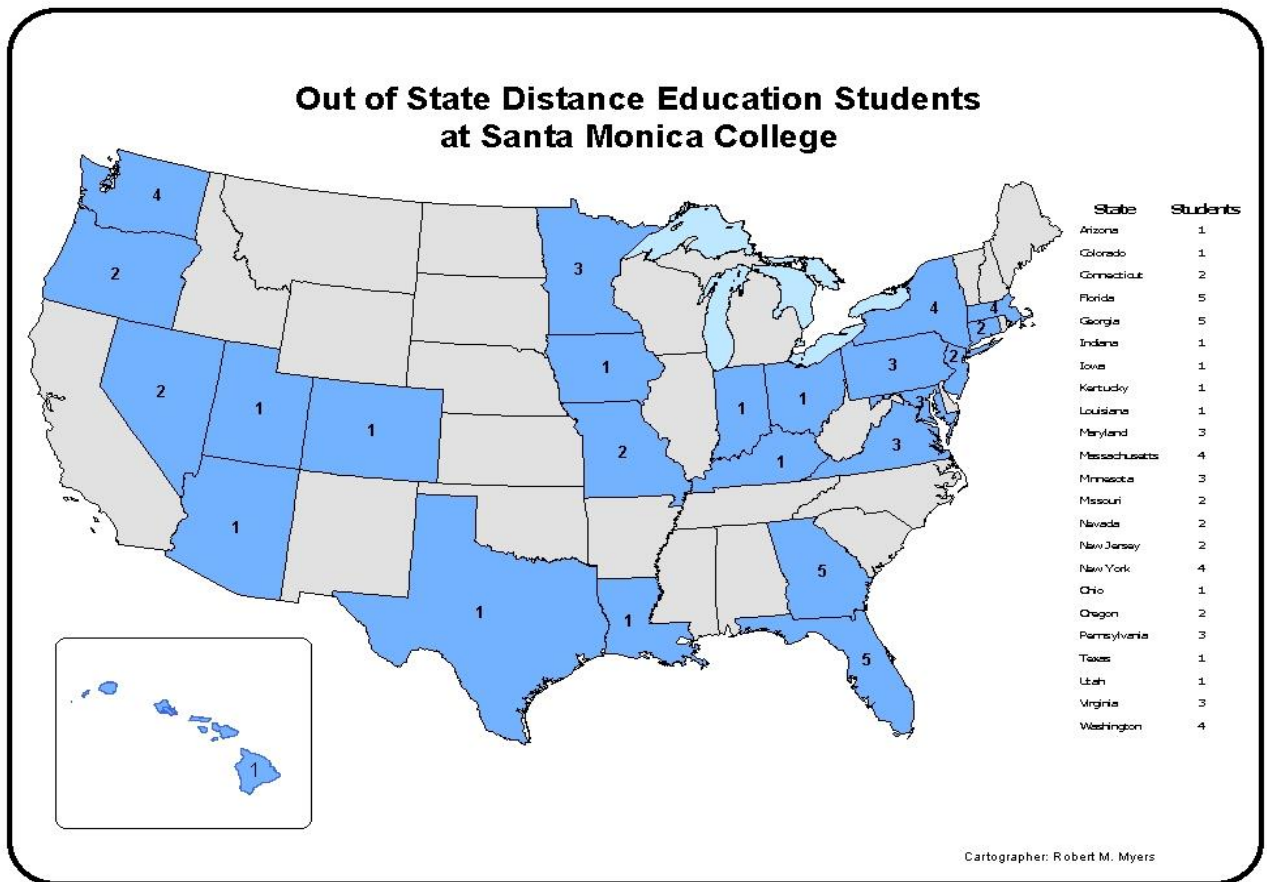
State Authorization for Online Students – Federal Updates

Over the past few years there has been, on a federal level, discussion on residency status and changes in how DE programs are permitted to serve out-of-state students. It might be important to mention that the federal legislation regarding state authorization is moving forward but doing so with much debate and multiple delays. The Department of Education expects that all institutions who deliver their coursework online seek authorization to legally offer distance education classes to students in a state in which it is not physically located.

While the legislative board supporting this initiative continues to clarify expectations, including rulings and deadlines on compliance, the SMC DE department continues to actively monitor the situation via the CCC Chancellors office and SARA the “state authorization reciprocity agreement” team.

This includes WCET-WICHE (Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education) who continues to advocate for educational institutions. With so many states having their own individual requirements, authorization can be an onerous and expensive venture. Some institutions have hired full-time distance education state compliance officers who have the sole duty of managing authorization with each state where an online student resides and insure they are current on changes. Prices vary for authorization by state but can run into thousands of dollars for annual certification. Some local community colleges (i.e. Pasadena City College, Las Positas) have decided that due to what they consider the low number of students served outside of California, the lesser of evils is to forgo state authorization and restrict students from outside their state from taking their online classes.

During the 2014-2015 year fifty-five students identified as living “out of state” and taking SMC online classes. The District will, at some point, need to decide if serving these students is cost-effective once the state authorization mandate is clarified and becomes law. The state representation for truly distance education students ebbs and flows and is a dynamic situation which changes with each term. But, you can see from this past year many states are only represented by a single student making the need for authorization and the time to certify questionable in terms of time and effort expended to meet the requirements for authorization. According to our MIS department data, there were 55 SMC students who reported living out of state this past year taking only online classes for a total of 280 units. Twenty-five states were represented including one student from Guam. The breakdown can be seen below in the map which was provided by Bob Myers.



eCollege/Pearson Learning Studio Platform Upgrades/Enhancements & Campus Releases

The following presents a partial list of eCollege platform upgrades released to SMC during this past year which impacted both faculty and students. These upgrades were intended to more actively engage learners with additional mobile course access, add dimension to the online classroom discussions by providing an immediate and easy vehicle for regular and effective interaction between faculty and student as well as student-to-student contact, build community, and make grading easier and for faculty to provide students with quick and ongoing feedback.

Notifications Feature - This release is a student-centric tool although it may also be of value to faculty. Users are now able to go into their course and click on the 'notifications' tool TAB to configure their individual preferences for when and how often they wish to receive updates by email and/or via text. These preferences include: Announcements, Threaded Discussions, Assignment Reminders and Published Grades. Users are able to choose any or all of these notifications and also choose the frequency with which they will receive them.

This enhancement is significant as it enables students and faculty to have quick, easy and reliable access to course short message service or SMS "real time" text updates on their mobile devices including phones. According to the Public Policy Institute June 2015 report on online courses in the CCC system, *"Interactive course software that provides instantaneous feedback could be particularly effecting in improving student performance in online courses"*. Not only does the auto-graded feature support this, but this new notifications features allows students to have seamless access to updates within their classes including receiving text messages when faculty post their grades and make comments and announcements.

Convert Numeric Score to Letter Grade Feature - This release is for faculty and automatically converts final numeric scores in the gradebook to a letter grade within the gradebook.

Threaded Discussions/Embed Audio-Video Feature - This enables users to embed a variety of web ready files within the threaded discussions. They can then be viewed directly within the thread instead of having to click a link to open a file. This enhancement aligns with the Public Policy Institute report on successful online courses in supporting regular and effective interaction. Not only is interaction a "best practice" but it is also included in the California Education Code (53200) for all online courses.

Other Enhancements of note include the recent purchase of a campus-wide user license for "Respondus" which is a robust testbank conversion software used by many California Community Colleges. This product allows faculty to easily configure and import massive publisher testbanks into their eCollege shells. Using large testbanks is a best practice when teaching online as this helps mitigate cheating. While we discovered challenges with the faculty single sign-on via Isis and problems with our Isis system integrating with an outside vendor, a temporary workaround has been established and the DE staff will support faculty with their account creation when they want to use this product. Moving forward it is expected that when faculty log into their Isis account they will have easy and ready access to this vendor without much ado and "hoop jumping," including having DE staff managing these for our faculty one by one.

Supporting faculty with non-traditional uses of the eCollege Platform:

The DE department continues to encourage all faculty to use eCollege platform to upload documents for our students. One reason is to insure that documents such as syllabi are available to our students 24/7/365, but also to support the District's sustainability initiative by offsetting some of the reprographics printing of 21 million pages a year, which includes the printing of syllabi. In addition to the current department faculty homerooms and special project shells, now totaling over 30 virtual workspaces, the DE department supports innovative ways for faculty to virtually convene and collaborate with one another and with students. A few of this past year's examples are below.

Scholars Faculty Homeroom: According to Teresa Garcia, lead faculty for the Scholars program, this workspace is "creating an accessible, more consistent and reliable means for communicating with the Scholars Program Faculty, staff and administrators. This will allow us to systematically collect syllabi and assess and share information amongst the faculty and staff and will ultimately benefit the students and strengthen the alliance with UCLA."

Student Equity Grant Project Support: Two student equity projects, the "Sociology Coaching Team" and "Intensive English Academy" are both reliant on using the eCollege platform to host student content. Configuring and providing support to these shells has been a challenge but also an honor to be part of the student equity project's successes.

Supplemental Instruction Leaders: Faculty have been requesting that their supplemental instruction leaders be provided access to their eCompanion shells so these tutoring leaders can access supplemental classroom materials. Supplemental instruction "SI" leaders use these materials during their twice-weekly meetings with students. Providing access to eCompanion shells to the SI leaders has been a popular request and crosses many departments including science, economics, English, accounting, Spanish and computer science classes and numbers in over twenty SI enrollments each term.

Summary

Returning to the Public Policy Institute report findings on what makes for successful online learning, there are multiple elements in play and tied to a well designed online class which supports student success. A few critical elements are insuring student readiness and providing student services including tutoring, supporting faculty with relevant pedagogical and technical training and finding ways to encourage faculty to build and deliver better digital classes including the appropriate use of educational technology and available tools. The OEI is developing a very targeted and purposeful roadmap, including an online faculty "effective practices" rubric for the California Community Colleges to embrace. The DE Department and Distance Education Committee will be working together in the upcoming semesters to try to bring this discussion forward as a campus community in order to stay on course with the faculty readiness project and OEI generally.

In the meantime, the SMC DE department continues to stay on track with projects associated with faculty readiness and student support services. These tasks and projects align nicely with what is taking place at the state OEI level. Many of this year's strides have been with the support and guidance of the Distance Education Committee and other areas on campus. What makes this year's accomplishments even more significant is that the department operated with a 25% reduction in Distance Education department staffing due to a vacancy. So, this was not only a productive year but a very busy year for the Distance Education department which is currently a small but industrious department of three.

End of Report