

# Quality Indicators for Online Programs

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# Online Quality & Community Colleges

- What's already out there?
- What concerns exist?
- What did our research find?
- Focus is on evaluating online programs, not the validity of online instruction.

# Standards and Best Practices

What's already out there?

- WCET - 1997
- WICHE - 2000
- NCA/HLC -1997/2006)
- IHEP – 2000
- AFT - 1999
- CHEA - 2002
- SLOAN-C - 1999
- C2T2 - 2002

# Common Themes

- Meyer (2002)
  - Institutional Support
  - Faculty and Student Support
  - Curriculum and Instruction
  - Evaluation and Assessment
- Added Technology in 2005

# What concerns exist with the research?

- Phipps and Merisotis - Institute for Higher Education Policy (IHEP), 1999
  - Questions with methodology used in examining online programs
  - Need for tool to be used in evaluating programs and for comparing between institutions
- Concerns still exist - Hannafin, Oliver, Hill, Glazer & Sharma, 2003; Sherlock & Pike 2004

# How to identify Indicators of Quality?

- Delphi Study
- Stakeholder Survey\*
- Factors vs. Indicators Survey

# Delphi Study

- Group of 21 DL professionals (higher ed, not all CC)
  - Started with 21, finished with 13.
  - Total of four survey cycles required.
- Open-ended survey
  - More than 300 items
  - Synthesized into 129
- 3 Consensus Surveys refined to 77 items

# Eight new potential indicators

- Marketing – both Internal & External
- Articulation agreements
- Same tuition and fees
- Faculty rewards for risk taking
- Institutional recognition of online course work by both Faculty (professional development) & Students (honors)
- Program Evaluations

# Factors versus Indicators

- 79 possible indicators between Delphi and Stakeholders
- More refinement was needed - Survey of 10 DL researchers; each was asked to identify an item as a factor, indicator, or other.
- **Factors** = inputs
- **Indicators** = outputs

# How did the 77 Items fare?

- 62 items were classified as **factors**.
- 8 items were classified as **indicators**
- 2 of the potential indicators were classified as **other**.
- No consensus was reached on 5 items.

# Sources of Indicators - 1

- **The department or program reviews new online courses to insure quality of subject matter and verify that program outcomes are met.**
  - Quality of subject matter
  - Does the course meet program outcomes

# Sources of Indicators - 2

- **Regular evaluations of the course design, instructional philosophy, pedagogical methods, and faculty use of the technology take place.**
  - Course design – navigation, clarity, assessment and outcomes, support services.
  - Retention, assessment of student learning, and course evaluations
  - What tools do faculty use? How much time?

## Sources of Indicators - 3

- **Student and faculty regularly complete satisfaction surveys about the online courses and programs.**
  - Usability of CMS
  - Type and availability of support services
  - Availability of online courses
  - Services and training provided
  - System reliability and performance

# Sources of Indicators - 4

- **The college utilizes assessment methods recommended by accrediting bodies for distance courses (e.g. North Central Association, Higher Education Commission, Distance Education Standards).**
  - Depends upon the accrediting agency

# Sources of Indicators - 5

- **Student learning outcomes in online courses are assessed and compared with student outcomes achieved by other delivery methods.**
- Comparison of Online student learning to classroom students – assumes that an agreed upon process exists

# Sources of Indicators - 6

- **Periodic program evaluations are used for program improvement, to aid in institutional decision-making, to provide program outcomes for funding agencies, to ensure stakeholders access to technology, to assess the range of services provided, course offerings, and barriers and challenges to online instruction.**
  - Does the institution perform program evaluations, and do they act upon the results?

# Sources of Indicators - 7

- **The college requires periodic review of courses delivered online.**
  - Are course reviews required?
  - Other indicators would be specific to the program and institution.

# Sources of Indicators - 8

- **Student persistence and attrition in online classes is monitored in comparison to institutional trends.**
- Compare student withdraw rates between online and f2f

# What now?

- Need to clearly identify the indicators.
  - Collecting input on a Quality Indicators Survey at
  - [https://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=463WWLA05xjGEC7r66fPQg\\_3d\\_3d](https://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=463WWLA05xjGEC7r66fPQg_3d_3d)
- Need criteria.
- Method for assessing actions the institution take as a result of evaluation?
- Evaluation Instrument?

# References

- More details can be found at <http://distance.mcckc.edu/hirner/quality.htm>
- Hannafin, M., Oliver, K., Hill, J.R., Glazer, E. & Sharma, P. (2003). Cognitive and learning factors in web-based distance learning environments. Handbook of Distance Education. Moore, M.G. & Anderson, W.G. Ed. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Mahwah, N.J.
- Hirner, L. (2007), Indicators of online quality at community colleges. Distance Learning Conference 2007. Madison, WI

# References

- Meyer, K.A. (2002). Quality in Distance Education; Focus on On-Line Learning. ASHE-Eric Higher Education Report, v29, 4. Jossey-Bass, San Francisco, CA.
- Phipps, R. & Merisotis, J. (1999). What's the Difference? A Review of Contemporary Research on the Effectiveness of Distance Learning in Higher Education. Institute for Higher Education Policy, Washington, DC.  
<http://www.ihep.com>
- Sherlock, J. & Pyke, J.G. (2004). Assessing online learning. Audioseminar Sept. 9, 2004. Magna Publications.

# Standards and Best Practices

- **AFT** [http://www.aft.org/higher\\_ed/downloadable/distance.pdf](http://www.aft.org/higher_ed/downloadable/distance.pdf)
- **C2T2** <http://www.aved.gov.bc.ca/c2t2/>
- **CHEA** <http://www.chea.org/Research/index.cfm#qualityassurance>
- **IHEP** <http://www.center.rpi.edu/PewSym/mono4.html>
- **NCA/HLC** <http://www.ncahlc.org>
- **SLOAN-C** <http://www.sloan-c.org/publications/>
- **WCET** <http://www.wect.info>
- **WICHE** <http://www.wiche.edu/pubs/>