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## RESULTS OF THE 2004 DISTANCE EDUCATION SURVEY

### SUMMARY FINDINGS OF RESPONDENTS (STUDENTS AND FACULTY/STAFF) DISTRICT-WIDE March 2005

During Fall 2004, the LRCCD Office of Institutional Research was invited by the district-wide Educational Technology Committee to help develop and administer two web based Distance Education surveys, (one for students and one for faculty, staff and managers), findings of which will be used as a resource for use with the Strategic Options Report (SOR) to develop a district-wide strategic plan for Distance Education and eLearning. The SOR is divided into four broad strategic areas: Program Design, Student Success and Student Support Services, Instructional Quality and Professional Development and Governance, Management and Funding. Questions for both Distance Education surveys were designed to provide information to assist with ongoing discussions surrounding the Strategic Options Report as it relates to the future of Distance Education at each of the four Los Rios Colleges.

### SURVEY HIGHLIGHTS

What follows are the most important highlights from both the student and faculty/staff Distance Education Surveys:

#### Opinions of both students and faculty/staff who responded to surveys:

- More than half of student (56.5%) and faculty/staff (53.0%) respondents believe there should be opportunities to complete degree and certificate programs via distance education, with slightly more than a quarter (27.4%) of faculty/staff who disagree
- Substantial proportions of both student (65.3%) and faculty/staff (76.8%) respondents believe that the potential market focus of distance education should be developed on the needs of the District's geographic service area (primarily Sacramento, El Dorado and parts of Yolo counties)
- Slightly higher proportions of student respondents (60.9%) compared to faculty/staff respondents (57.4%) believe that students should be required to come to campus for course orientations. Conversely, slightly higher proportions of faculty/staff (57.8%) compared to student respondents (54.7%) believe students should take final exams on campus

#### Opinions of faculty/staff survey respondents:

- A high proportion of faculty/staff respondents agree (76.2%) that program areas with high demand should be a factor in Distance Education development
- Of additional importance, is the 27.5% of faculty/staff respondents who indicate "other" reasons should be used to select courses for Distance Education development (pedagogical soundness and academic appropriateness of the course material as it applies to Distance Education were two common examples)
- Almost all faculty/staff respondents believe faculty participation in the development, preparation, and delivery of distance education should continue to be voluntary and almost three quarters of respondents believe options for incentives to encourage faculty to participate in distance education should be explored
- More than half of faculty/staff (67.9%) agree that student services should be available to Distance Education students without having to physically visit one of the colleges. However, 17.3% disagreed, stating that face-to-face is preferable in the advising arena
- Faculty/staff respondents believe Technology Infrastructure (83.8%), Marketing (72.5%), and Training for Distance Education (71.7%) should be coordinated district-wide
- Lower proportions of faculty/staff agree that Program Development (64.5%) and Scheduling (55.5%) should be coordinated district-wide
- Almost three-quarters (73.5%) of faculty/staff respondents believe the evaluation of Distance Education should use the identical student success measures (Student Learning Outcomes) as are used in classroom based courses

#### Opinions of student survey respondents:

- More than one-fifth of student respondents stated the following are reasons they took or are interested in taking Distance Education courses: anytime/anywhere access (65.6%); employment conflicts (55.8%); family and home responsibilities (46.6%); to meet course load (31.8%); and because on-campus course sections were full (23.0%)
- Over 60.0% of student respondents believe the following student services should be provided online: Transfer, Counseling/Academic Advising, Financial Aid, Disabled Student Services (DSPS), Assessment, Library Services, and Career Planning
- However, over 10.0% of student respondents *do not* believe the following student services should be provided online: Tutoring, Associated Student Government, Counseling/Academic Advising and Assessment

The survey findings are detailed on the following pages.

## WHO RESPONDED TO THE SURVEYS

The following provides profiles of those who responded to the surveys, both the student and the faculty/staff survey to help frame the survey results presented in this summary. The student respondent profile generally reflects Fall 2004 end of semester enrollment proportions by college, except at ARC where the 35.3% of survey respondents is lower than the 44.1% of total ARC students enrolled. Whereas the 70.1% of females who responded to the survey is higher than the 55.5% of females enrolled district-wide, the ethnicity profile of respondents generally reflects district enrollment by ethnicity.

**Table 1: Student Respondent Profile**

Attend Classes Primarily at:	Gender	Ethnicity	Age	Unit Load	Hours of Employment	Highest Level of Education	Educational Goal*
ARC = 35.3%	Female = 70.1%	African American = 6.3%	Under 18 = 2.3%	Full-Time (12 or more units) = 36.8%	1 to 19 = 11.2%	Community College Courses = 46.5%	Transfer to 4Yr College w/ AA/AS = 38.2%
CRC = 16.8%	Male = 29.9%	Asian = 12.1%	18 - 20 = 23.2%	Half-Time (6 to 11 units) = 30.5%	20 to 39 = 28.1%	Community College Degree/Cert = 15.7%	Acquire Job Skills = 25.9%
SCC = 28.0%		Filipino = 3.6%	21 - 24 = 15.6%	Part-Time (5 or less units) = 32.7%	40 or more = 37.9%	Baccalaureate Degree = 16.9%	Transfer to 4YR College w/o AA/AS = 13.8%
FLC = 11.3%		Latino = 9.4%	25 - 29 = 13.1%		None = 20.2%	Masters Degree or PhD = 10.4%	Associate Degree, Vocational = 6.7%
Off Campus Location = 8.5%		Native American = 1.3%	30 - 39 = 17.3%		Other = 2.6%	Professional Degree/Certificate = 3.4%	Associate Degree, General Ed = 6.0%
		Pacific Islander = 1.0%	40 & Over = 28.5%			Other = 7.0%	
		White = 52.4%					
		Other/Decline to State = 14.0%					

\*Only reporting categories with at least 5.0% of responses. Refer to full report for further detail.

Survey respondents tend to be older, 45.8% of respondents are over 30 (compared to 35.3% of students enrolled in Fall 2004). Also reflective of an older population, respondents are working full-time (37.9%) and many, 27.3%, have Baccalaureate or Masters Degrees. High proportions, 38.2%, of survey respondents have an educational goal of transferring to a 4-year college with an AA/AS but a quarter (25.9%) are taking courses at a Los Rios college to acquire job skills.

Of the Los Rios faculty and staff who responded to the Distance Education survey there were fairly equivalent proportions responding from each of the colleges as illustrated in Table 2, with a lower 12.4% from Folsom Lake College, given its smaller size. The majority of respondents, 70.3%, are faculty members, with 80.7% of respondents working in an instructional area and 11.4% working within student services.

**Table 2: Faculty/Staff Respondent Profile**

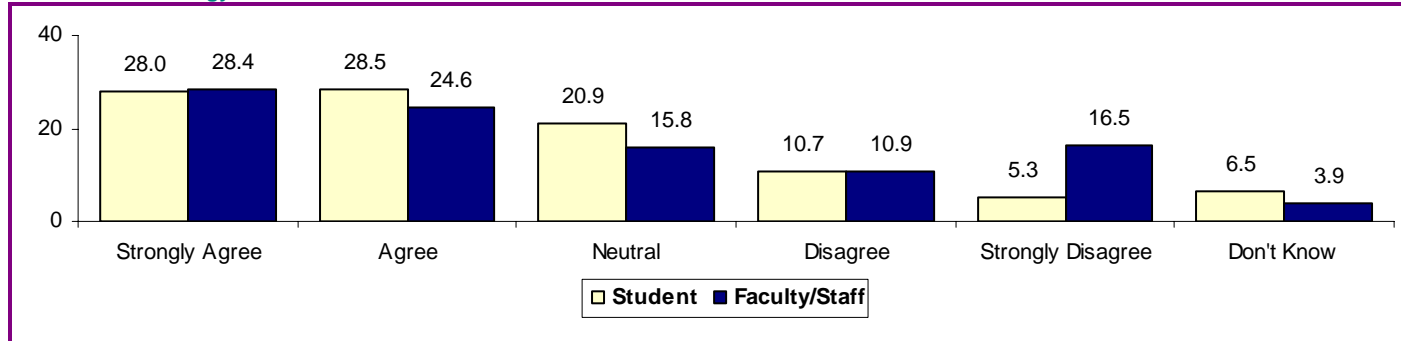
Primarily Work at:	Classification	Area
ARC = 29.7%	Faculty = 70.3%	Instructional = 80.7%
CRC = 26.1%	Adjunct Faculty = 10.6%	Student Services = 11.4%
SCC = 30.4%	Classified = 12.4%	Administrative Support = 5.0%
FLC & EDC = 12.4%	Administration = 6.0%	
Off Campus Location = 1.5%		

## PROGRAM DESIGN: DEVELOPMENT AND DELIVERY OF EDUCATION AND SERVICES AT A DISTANCE

Both students and faculty/staff were asked if Los Rios colleges should provide degree and certificate programs for which all coursework can be completed through Distance Education modalities. Chart one demonstrates that both students and faculty are in general agreement that Los Rios colleges should provide educationally appropriate degree and certificate programs that can be completed through Distance Education technology. However, it is important to note that there were higher proportions of faculty and staff, 16.5%, who strongly disagree with moving forward in this area, compared to the 5.3% of those students who responded. Worth noting is the 27.1% of SCC faculty and staff who strongly disagree that Los Rios and its colleges should provide degree and certificate programs for which all coursework can be completed through Distance Education. Comments from both students and

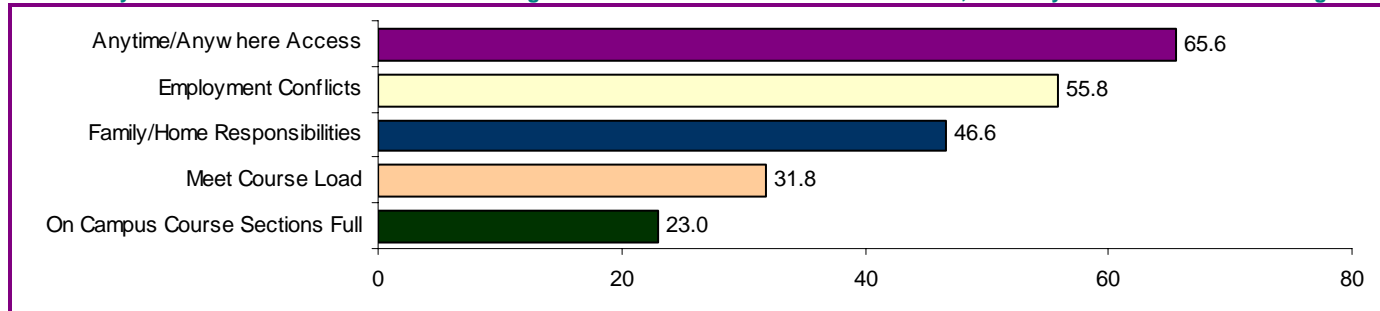
faculty/staff stress the value of face to face interaction between students and faculty as well as the benefits students receive from discussions amongst each other and this may be one of the concerns that contributed to the high proportions of faculty/staff who disagree with completely all coursework solely through distance education.

**Chart 1: Los Rios Colleges should provide degree and certificate programs for which all coursework can be completed through Distance Education technology.**



Students and faculty/staff who responded to the survey believe that the potential market focus of distance education should be developed on the needs of the District's geographic service area (primarily Sacramento, El Dorado, and parts of Yolo counties). As discussions continue on the strategic direction of Distance Education development, it is also helpful to understand why our students have taken or are interested in taking their courses via Distance Education technology. Chart 2 illustrates those categories in which over 20% of respondents stated was a reason they took or are interested in taking Distance Education, ranging from the 65.6% who want anytime/anywhere access to the 23.0% who took a Distance Education course because on campus course sections were full.

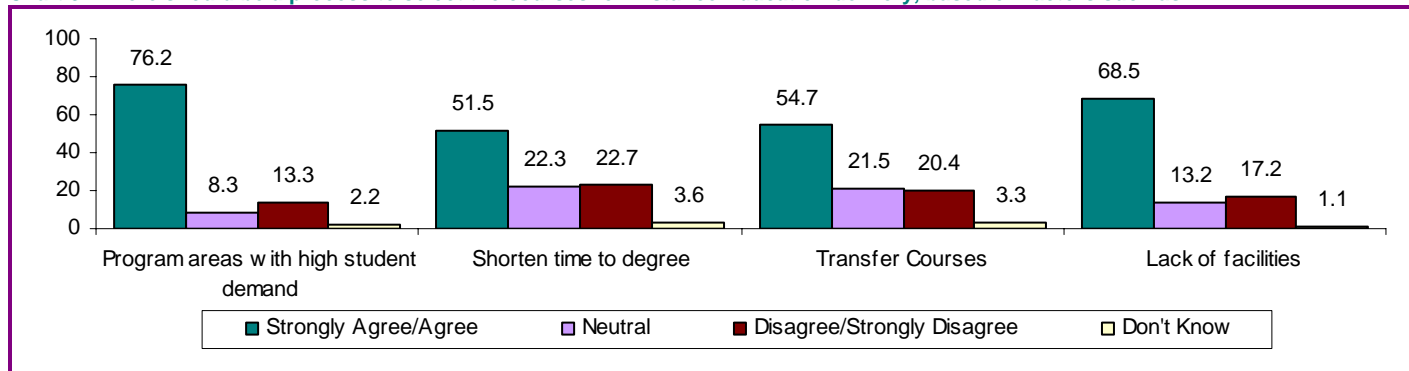
**Chart 2: If you have taken or are interested in taking Distance Education courses in the future, what is your main reason for doing so?**



\*Respondents could select multiple responses.

Faculty/staff were asked if there should be a process to select courses for Distance Education delivery based on certain factors. Chart 3 demonstrates the responses. For example, a high proportion of faculty/staff agree or strongly agree (76.2%) that program areas with high student demand should be a factor in the development of Distance Education.

**Chart 3: There should be a process to select the courses for Distance Education delivery, based on factors such as:**



But of further interest is the 27.5% of faculty/staff respondents who gave "other" reasons to select courses for Distance Education delivery. A review of those who provided specific comments indicate that pedagogical soundness and the academic appropriateness of course material should be factors in selecting courses for Distance Education delivery.

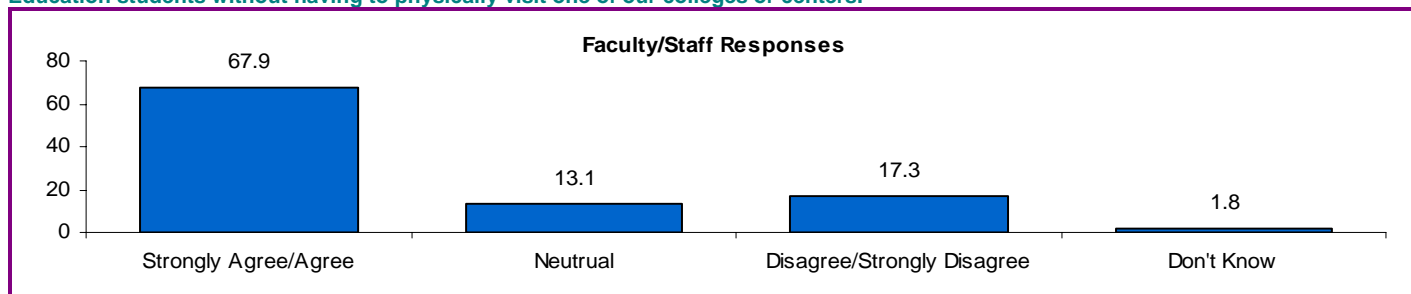
Faculty and staff who responded to the survey believe faculty participation in the development, preparation and delivery of distance education should continue to be voluntary. Respondents also believe Los Rios colleges should explore options and incentives to encourage faculty to participate in the development, preparation and delivery of Distance Education courses.

## STUDENT SUCCESS AND STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES

Survey recipients were asked a series of questions that pertain to factors that promote the successful achievement of student goals through the participation in distance education and services. In regards to student readiness, both students and faculty believe that orientations and training to promote student success should be available to students, however there are some differing beliefs as to the frequency and mode of such training. Comments from both students and faculty suggest training and orientations should be more like an assessment model, in which an assessment is made of the students readiness, including technical preparedness, to participate in distance education style of learning.

Faculty and staff who responded to the survey believe that Los Rios colleges should identify and develop student services that would be available to Distance Education students without having to physically visit one of our colleges or centers, as demonstrated in Chart 4. However, there were 17.3% of respondents who disagree/strongly disagree with this statement, some voicing a concern exemplified by the following comment that there is an "...implied premise that the online student will receive services equivalent to those obtained by on-campus students..." and that "...face-to-face in the advising arena is typically preferable."

**Chart 4: Los Rios Colleges should identify and develop an appropriate set of various student services that would be available to Distance Education students without having to physically visit one of our colleges or centers.**

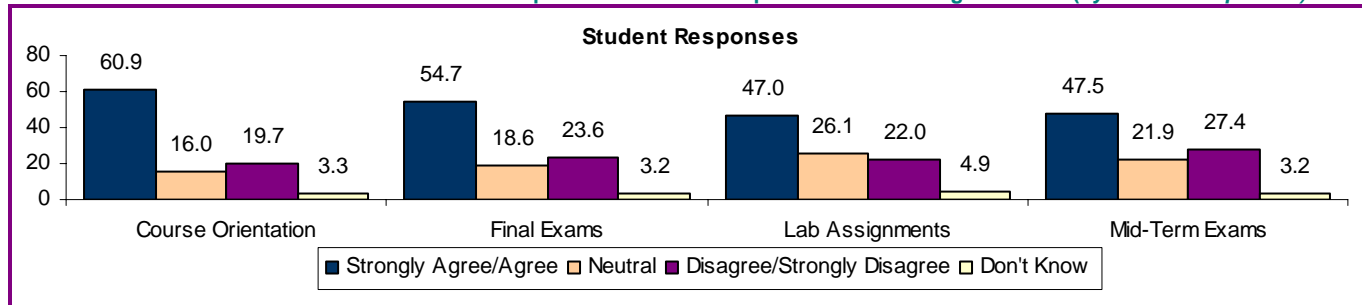


Students were asked to indicate if specific student services should be provided online. Areas where at least 60% of respondents agree/strongly agree should be provided online include Transfer Services, Counseling/Academic Advising, Financial Aid, Disabled Student Services (DSPS), Assessment, Library Services and Career Planning. Faculty/staff who provided specific comments as to which student services should be provided to Distance Education students online indicated services such as Counseling/Academic Advising, Assessment, Library Services and Tutoring Services.

Areas identified by faculty/staff generally reflect the same areas students are also most concerned about. However, there were areas where at least 10% of students who responded disagree/strongly disagree be provided online and they include Tutoring, Associated Student Government, Counseling/Academic Advising and Assessment, perhaps mirroring faculty concern that some services are best provided in a face-to-face format.

Both student and faculty/staff survey respondents were asked to evaluate on-campus requirements for Distance Education students. Charts 5 and 6 illustrate that there is general agreement about which areas respondents believe students should be required to come to campus. Higher proportions of students who responded to the survey believe that students should be required to attend on campus course orientations than do faculty who took the survey. Conversely slightly higher proportions of faculty/staff who responded to the survey believe that students should be required to come to campus to take their final exams.

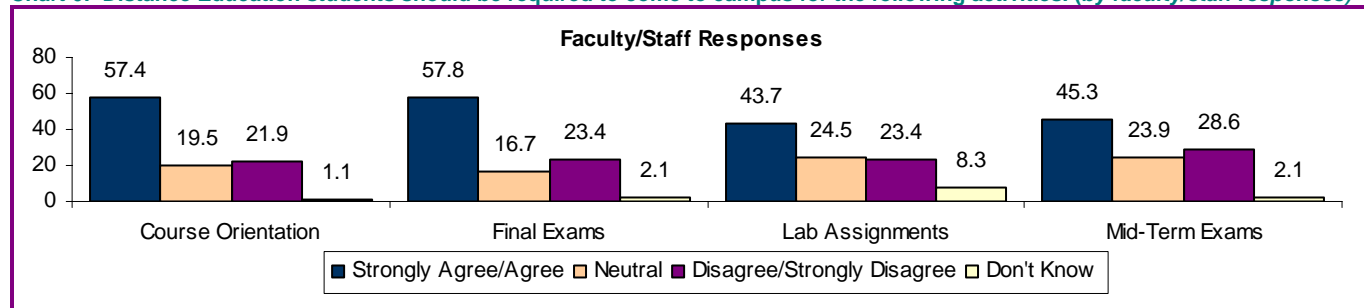
**Chart 5: Distance Education students should be required to come to campus for the following activities. (by student responses)**



A review of open ended comments provided by both student and faculty/staff respondents shows that while some respondents believe that if Los Rios colleges are going to develop a true distance education program that there should be no mandatory

requirements to come to a campus; that all courses and their support services should be held online, only. However, many faculty/staff and student respondents voiced concern about the feasibility of offering online lab assignments as well as how we will be able to monitor students during examinations to ensure integrity.

**Chart 6: Distance Education students should be required to come to campus for the following activities. (by faculty/staff responses)**



In closing, both faculty/staff and student respondents commented that requiring students to come to a campus is really dependent on the type of course being offered and should be up to the discretion of the faculty teaching the course.

### INSTRUCTIONAL QUALITY AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

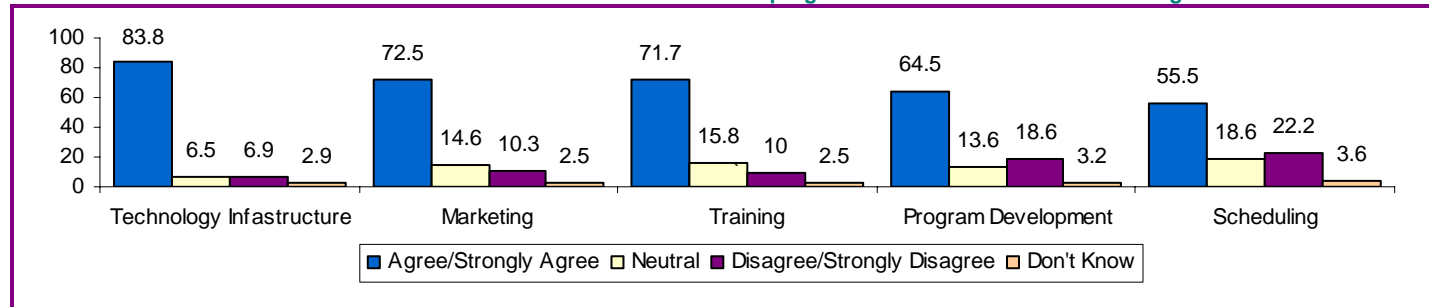
Survey recipients were asked a series of questions that deal with factors associated with qualifications, training, and ongoing support for faculty and staff involved with providing distance education and services. A high proportion, 83.6%, of faculty/staff respondents believe that the colleges should require a consistent standard of demonstrated preparation for Distance Education instructors prior to teaching Distance Education courses. Many faculty/staff who responded to the survey provided specific and informative suggestions through comments on the types of on-going support that should be provided to Distance Education faculty. The comments range from calling for the need of a stronger technology infrastructure throughout the district as well as more technical support for faculty as well as ongoing training and faculty collaboration. Specific suggestions include calling for roundtable discussions, workshops, and hosted thread discussion boards which would facilitate best practices in distance education amongst faculty who teach their courses through distance education. Survey respondents also believe that classified staff should be provided an appropriate level of training to ensure they are able to provide services to both the faculty who teach and the students who take Distance Education courses.

Faculty and staff survey respondents agree/strongly agree that training, information and on-going support for the *development* of distance education should be provided for Deans, Department Chairs and the Faculty Evaluation Peer Review Committee, ranging from 81.9% to 75.0%. Likewise, respondents agree/strongly agree that training, information and on-going support for the *management* of Distance Education programs should be provided for Deans, Department Chairs and Faculty Evaluation Peer Review Committee, ranging from 85.5% for Deans, 82.2% for Department Chairs, to a slightly lower 67.3% for the Faculty Evaluation Peer Review committees. Similar proportions of respondents agree/strongly agree that training, information, and on-going support for the evaluation of distance education programs should be provided for Deans, Department Chairs and the Faculty Evaluation Peer Review Committee, ranging from 89.6% to 86.1% who do so.

### GOVERNANCE, MANAGEMENT AND FUNDING

Faculty and staff were asked a final series of questions that focused on the potential areas for coordination in program development, support and resource utilization of Distance Education across the district and its four colleges. Chart 7 demonstrates that there is general agreement that Technology Infrastructure, Marketing, and Training for Distance Education should be coordinated district-wide.

**Chart 7: There should be district-wide coordination of Distance Education programs and resources in the following areas:**



However, slightly lower proportions of faculty/staff respondents agree/strongly agree that Program Development should be coordinated district-wide, with 18.6% of respondents who disagree or strongly disagree. Only 55.5% of survey respondents

agree/strongly agree that scheduling of distance education should be a coordinated district-wide and 22.2% of respondents actually disagree/strongly disagree that there should be district-wide coordination of Distance Education, scheduling, believing that scheduling decisions be made at the local college level.

With 73.5% of respondents who either agree or strongly agree that the evaluation of Distance Education should use the identical student success measures (Student Learning Outcomes) that classroom based courses use, it is evident that regardless of the delivery mode, the issue of quality is the same for all Los Rios courses and programs.

## **SURVEY RESPONDENTS PROVIDE FEEDBACK VIA COMMENTS**

Both student and faculty/staff survey respondents were provided space on the survey instrument to add additional comments about Distance Education programs and course development at Los Rios colleges. Comments were wide ranging and included specific concerns as well as comments that speak to the benefits of distance education courses and programs. What is interesting is that the expressed patterns that emerged from both student and faculty/staff respondents demonstrate similarities in both the concerns as well as the positive feedback received. For example, many student and faculty/staff survey respondents who provided comments agreed that perhaps some classes are better suited to Distance Education modalities than others, using lecture courses versus “lab” courses as an example and some suggested that many classes would instead lend themselves better to a hybrid style of course, where there are some on campus requirements.

### **Comments from Students and Faculty/Staff Provide Positive Feedback**

Many respondents, both from students and faculty/staff, provided feedback that stressed that without the educational opportunity Distance Education provides that for many, those who juggle work, family and school responsibilities or those with disabilities, may not be able to pursue their educational goals. Specific comments, such as those that follow, demonstrate how respondents are able to identify both the positives and the drawbacks to Distance Education:

- Distance Education is an area in which we can make huge strides to assist many students to continue their education that would not otherwise be able to do so.
- Distance Education provides students a level of flexibility they need to complete their coursework
- A belief that online and distance courses are an important learning tool for a college to offer. They provide access to education to numerous groups that otherwise might not have the opportunity to procure an advanced education. However, many respondents also advocated that the classroom setting is an important link to share ideas and facilitate better understanding. The social aspects of classroom learning is paramount to develop an individuals' ability to not only absorb knowledge, but express it.
- Many faculty/staff and some student respondents voiced their support for growth in Distance Education offerings across the district, but recommend the district and its colleges proceed cautiously, suggesting that we make the best of online education by weaving it in with face-to-face instruction by first offering more hybrid classes.

### **Comments from Students and Faculty/Staff Provide Concern and Suggestions**

The following represent broad themes that emerged from the comment section that speak specifically to concerns and suggestions surrounding Distance Education course and program development; categories for which comments were very specific and also for which respondents voiced the same general themes:

- a need for improved network and server infrastructure
- 24/7 helpdesk
- the need to address basic instructional issues (plagiarism, cheating, the need for face-to-face interaction and feedback)
- concern that certain types of courses don't lend themselves to distance education (science courses with lab components and foreign language were common examples)
- development of an information portal for faculty (to include things like technical resources, a faculty mentor program, hosted thread discussion boards and best practice resources in Distance Education that faculty/staff could access easily)

Noting the voiced concerns and others that might be uncovered in future discussions, it does appear that there is a collective interest in continuing the conversation and discussions in regard to the future of distance education for the Los Rios Community College District and its four colleges.

This executive summary report was written by Betty Glycer-Culver, Research Analyst, LRCCD Office of Institutional Research (IR) and is based on research conducted by the LRCCD Office of Institutional Research under the direction of Dr. Judy Beachler who provided valuable input related to survey and report development. The author gratefully acknowledges: the work of the members of the Education Technology Committee who worked with her on the survey design and development; the work of Minh La, IT Analyst for Institutional Research for database, web survey administration and technical support; and IR Administrative Assistant, Adrienne Aquino, for coordination of survey mailings via e-mail. Additional copies of this report, as well as the more comprehensive frequency distribution reports, can be downloaded from our Web Site at: <http://irweb.losrios.edu> or e-mail to IR@losrios.edu.

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