NEVADA SYSTEM OF HIGHER EDUCATION

University of Nevada,
Las Vegas

University of Nevada,
Reno

Nevada State College

College of Southern
Nevada

Great Basin College

Truckee Meadows
Community College

Western Nevada College

Desert Research
Institute

2007-08
Distance Education Report

December 2008

Prepared by the Office of Academic and Student Affairs
in Collaboration with NSHE Distance Education Directors

This page is intentionally blank.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Tables and Charts

This page is intentionally blank.

Executive Summary

This report focuses on distance education within the Nevada System of Higher Education (NSHE) for the 2007-08 academic year and provides documentation of the substantial growth of distance education within all colleges and universities. Distance education is a field of continuous improvement and change, and NSHE institutions are constantly working to extend their offerings beyond their physical limits to meet the learning needs of students in Nevada. Without distance education many students, especially those living in Nevada's extensive rural areas and those with heavy work or family commitments, would not be able to pursue their higher education goals.

The following are a few of the major highlights in this report:

- The number of students enrolled in at least one distance education course increased from 5,798 in Fall 2001 to 24,656 in Fall 2007, an increase of 18,858 students or 325 percent.

- The College of Southern Nevada (CSN) will soon launch the CSN Online Campus. The CSN Online Campus will meet the needs of the 100 percent online learners by providing all of the courses, programs, and services that are commonly provided to students attending traditional on campus courses and programs.

- In order to provide a more robust support structure, Western Nevada College's (WNC) Library & Media Services reference librarians assumed responsibility as the first contact for students enrolled in online classes. This arrangement worked well over the past several years, with a record number of over 550 calls for assistance handled in student support.

- Building on the universal deployment of WebCampus, all students admitted to Nevada State College (NSC) are enrolled automatically in an online course called *Student WebCampus Orientation*. The course includes all of the WebCampus learning tools with related learning exercises.

- Truckee Meadows Community College's (TMCC) WebCollege is developing a fast-track online degree program (courses offered in a 5-week online format) which will target nontraditional working adults and will offer an accelerated solution for degree completion. The degree program is slated to be launched in Spring 2010 and will feature credit for lifelong learning experience (where appropriate), a student academic plan, fostering student learning communities, and will focus on degree completion for nontraditional students.

- The University of Nevada, Reno's (UNR) Teaching, Learning, and Technology staff is very active in training faculty to teach online. More than 1,000 class sections each semester have technology components. Technical support for online students through the Knowledge Center is excellent.

- Since 2005, the University of Nevada Las Vegas (UNLV) Distance Education Office captions all streaming videos, which are used by distance education courses and

sometimes the instructors' face to face campus sections. The captioning of videos ensures Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliance. The shared use of distance education created materials utilizes scarce UNLV resources and upgrades educational effectiveness across the campus.

- Great Basin College's (GBC) distance education offerings currently account for over 51 percent of GBC's overall enrollment. Great Basin College's WebCampus continues to grow at an exceptional rate. The WebCampus has seen a 142 percent increase in FTE from Fall 2005 to Fall 2007.

Students increasingly demand and expect distance education offerings. In order to meet the rising demand, some important elements should be examined in a statewide coordinated effort: infrastructure, faculty development and support, student services, accessibility, and the policies that govern distance education.

Introduction and Background

The Nevada System of Higher Education (NSHE) is constantly working to provide and extend educational opportunities to all of Nevada. With the rapid population growth experienced in Nevada, there is an increasing number of students eligible for and participating in some form of higher education. NSHE employs many successful programs to reach these students; one particularly successful method is distance education.

Simply defined, distance education is education delivered where the learner and instructor are separated in space and/or time (Saba, 2005). Institutions see distance education as a means of enrolling more students, broadening their student base, generating fee revenue, offering courses in niche markets, and meeting their regional commitments cost-effectively (Calvert, 2005).

Distance education is particularly important as one of the performance indicators set by the Board of Regents to measure an institution's effectiveness in delivering quality education to all students. Distance education is specifically aimed at meeting two of the Board's master plan goals: 1) a student-focused system, and 2) opportunity and accessible education for all. The planning target is: "expand distance education offerings so that, on average, all students will have participated in some technology-mediated instruction prior to graduation." A Nevada online directory of all distance education courses is available to all NSHE students to assure the greatest possible access to distance education by all students.

Data Source

The distance education data include state-supported distance education course enrollment only, derived from the NSHE course taxonomy. Non-state supported course enrollment, such as self-supporting courses offered through continuing or adult education, is not included.

Student enrollments in NSHE courses are counted as state-supported Full-Time Equivalency (FTE) in all academic credit courses that can be used to fulfill the requirements of a degree or certificate and where student fee revenue is collected in support of the state operating fund. On the official enrollment reporting date of each term, institutions submit a file composed of individual student records, one record per student per course. Records are created for all students enrolled in at least one credit-bearing course that qualifies as state supported FTE. The total student FTE reported in the file equals the institutions' official enrollment recorded for that term.

Distance education courses are identified in the course taxonomy using the following guidelines:

1. The instructor and the members of the class are physically separated resulting in no contact in a traditional classroom setting.
2. The "at-a-distance" instruction is provided using technologies generally recognized as distance education technologies.
3. If a distance education course section is totally web-based, it should be identified as distance education. Hybrid instruction, using various methods of instruction in addition to the traditional classroom, does not count as distance education.
4. Other than any required meetings for organizational purposes, and in some cases on-site labs, or testing, there are no regularly scheduled class meetings with the instructor except in the

case where the delivery of the distance education course is synchronous, for example, interactive video. There may also be labs or testing in non-distance education formats.

5. In some cases, a distance education section includes students in a traditional classroom while simultaneously providing the instruction to other students who are not in that classroom. In this instance, instruction in the traditional classroom does not qualify as distance education. However, the instruction received at a site other than the traditional classroom does qualify as distance education.

Delivery methods for distance education

The two most prevalent technologies widely used throughout the NSHE are interactive video (IAV) and web-based courses. In an interactive video setting, students attend an IAV classroom and participate with the class via a two-way interactive audio/video television or a one-way video with two-way audio. IAV classrooms can be found in many locations throughout Nevada. In web-based courses, distance education courses are provided via electronically-delivered materials. Students interact mainly through web-based forum discussions and email.

The shift in delivery methods (from face-to-face to online) also signifies a shift in teaching methods. As the delivery of distance education moves from face-to-face courses using an objectivist, teacher-centered pedagogy to online and hybrid courses that utilize digital technologies, a new teaching pedagogy emerges. This new pedagogy emphasizes a constructivist, collaborative, and student-centered approach to teaching (Hiltz and Turoff, 2005). As faculty embrace this new pedagogy, the nature of the teaching profession is being transformed, creating a new generation of skilled faculty. The possession and utilization of digital technologies becomes one of the marketable skills that faculty will be increasingly expected to demonstrate and master.

Comparison to national trends

Developments in Nevada's distance education programs are consistent with national trends. Currently, more than four million students are enrolled in distance education classes and programs, and more than ninety percent of community colleges and more than seventy percent of colleges and universities offer online classes, programs and degrees. Online classes also represent the fastest growing educational segment. National surveys report a 9.7% increase for distance education programs in higher education versus a 1.5% increase for higher education overall (Sloan-C) and a 15% increase for distance education programs at community colleges (Instructional Technology Council).

Distance education programs focus on improving access to higher education. As this method of instructional delivery matures, it is a viable option for working adults, active duty military personnel, public safety (fire, police, EMT), and allied health professionals as well as for those in remote/rural areas, students with young children, traditional students seeking to maximize their class schedules, and those with accessibility needs.

NSHE Distance Education

To better understand distance education in the NSHE, the focus of this report is on data for Fall 2007. Data and analyses are offered on enrollment and student demographics, demonstrating rapidly growing enrollment in distance education.

Enrollment

The accelerated growth of distance education is demonstrated through an examination of headcount. The NSHE *Annual Performance Indicators* include an overview of distance education, using the key indicator of growth in enrollment of students receiving instruction via distance education. The following chart displays the unduplicated headcount of students having participated in some form of distance education in the NSHE since Fall 2001. Again, headcount is defined as the total number of students (full-time and part-time) that participated in at least one distance education course.

Key Indicator: Growth in enrollment of students receiving instruction via distance education

Chart 1

NSHE Enrollment in Distance Education Courses
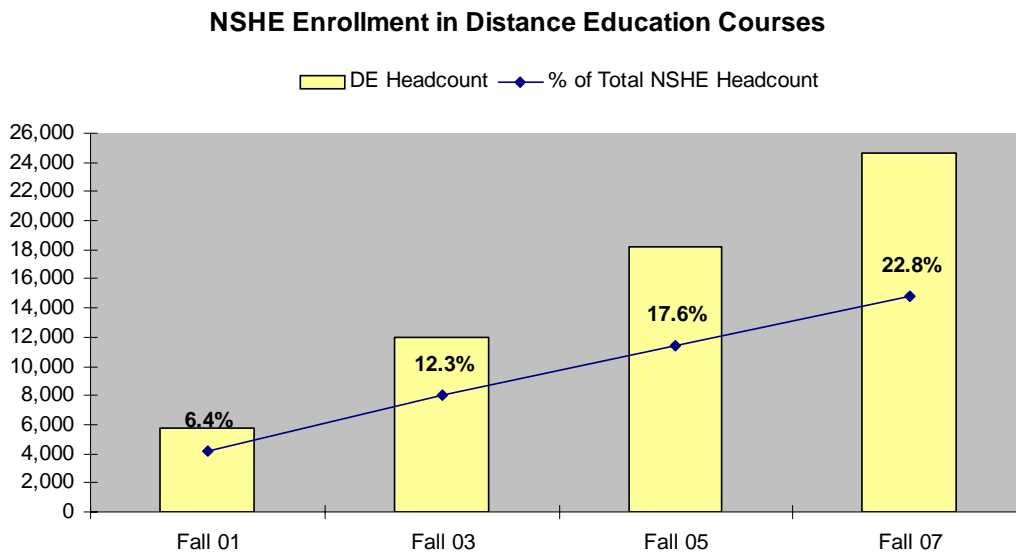
Source: NSHE Institutional Research

The number of students enrolled in at least one distance education course increased from 5,798 in Fall 2001 to 24,656 in Fall 2007, an increase of 18,858 students or 325 percent.

The chart on the following page, also from the NSHE *Distance Education Performance Indicator*, displays by institution the distance education unduplicated headcount as a percentage of total headcount.

Chart 2

NSHE Enrollment in Distance Education Courses
Fall 2007

☐ DE Headcount →◆→ % of Total Headcount

55.0%

50.7%

19.0%

33.6%

24.6%

18.3%

8.7%

UNR   UNLV   NSC   CSN   GBC   TMCC   WNC
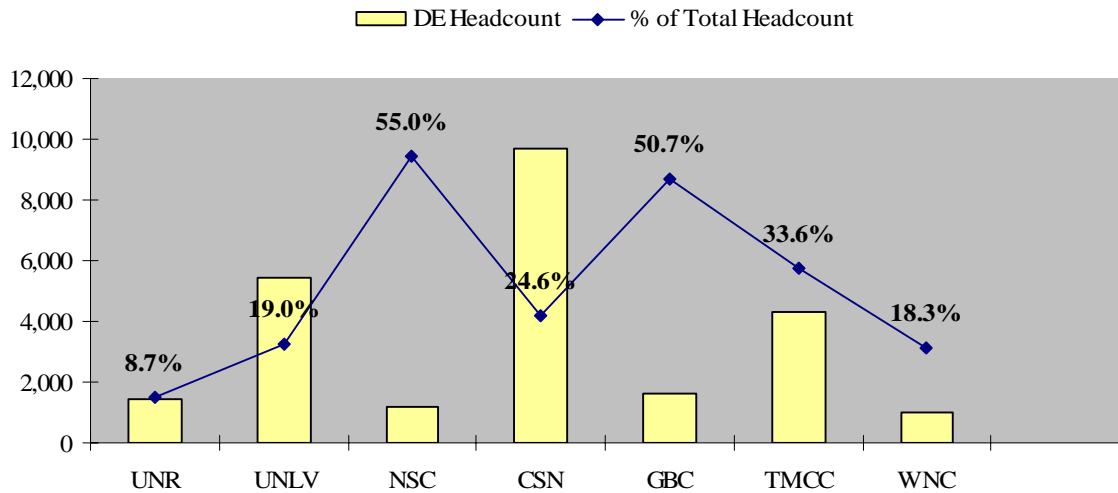
Source: NSHE Institutional Research

The larger percentage of distance education students at Nevada State College (NSC) and Great Basin College (GBC) demonstrates the value of distance education on two points: 1) utilization of current technologies to meet the needs of today's students (NSC) and 2) utilization of distance education to meet the needs of students across a wide geographic area (GBC).

Chart 3 demonstrates by institution the percentage of undergraduate sections delivered completely by distance education.

Chart 3

Undergraduate Sections Delivered Completely by Distance Education
as a Percent of Total Undergraduate Sections - Fall 2007

42%

29%

17%   17%

13%

8%

3%

CSN   GBC   NSC   TMCC   UNLV   UNR   WNC
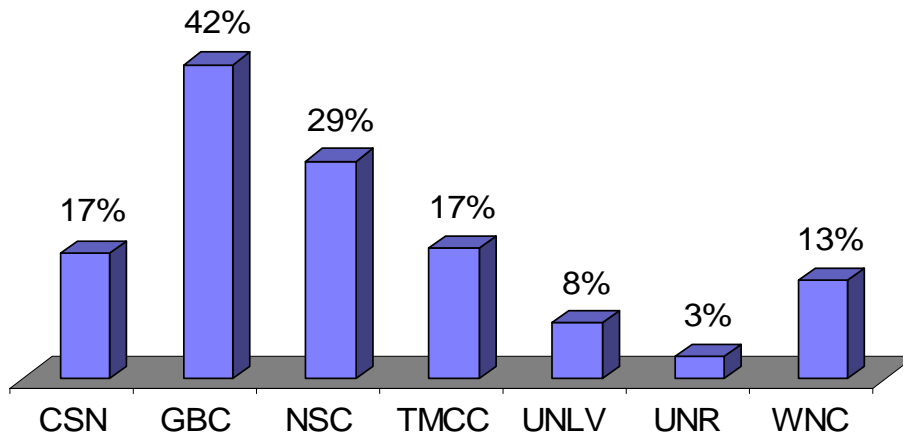
Source: NSHE Institutional Research

Just as with the total distance education headcount, GBC and NSC also provide the greatest

percentage of undergraduate courses delivered completely by distance education at 42 percent and 29 percent, respectively.

The following table demonstrates by institution the average class size of a distance education course.

Table 1

Distance Education Average Class Size Headcount by Institution
Fall 2007

UNR	UNLV	NSC	CSN	GBC	TMCC	WNC	NSHE
18.3	24.2	19.6	23.9	6.8	23.9	11.7	19.3

Source: NSHE Institutional Research

The average number of students enrolled in a distance education course for the system is 19.3.

With small class sizes, it might be expected that academic performance in distance education courses would be high. Unfortunately, the reverse is true. The following table from the NSHE *Distance Education Performance Indicator* compares the successful completion rate of students in the general population to students in distance education. Successful completion rate is defined as a student receiving a grade of D or better for the course.

Sub Indicator: Course completion rate of students enrolling in distance education

Table 2

Course Completion Rates
Distance Education Courses vs. All NSHE Courses
Fall 2007

	Distance Education in the NSHE	All Courses Offered in the NSHE
Course Completion Rate (% of students completing a course with a grade of "D" or better)	66%	80%

Source: NSHE Institutional Research

Comparatively, students in the NSHE general population successfully complete their courses at a higher rate (80%) than students enrolled in distance education (66%).

The following table demonstrates the current and future online degrees by institution.

Table 3

Current and Future Online Degrees by Institution

Institution	Current Degrees	Certificate Programs	Future Degrees
UNLV	6	0	3
UNR	3	1	3
NSC	1	0	0
CSN	19	8	2
GBC	5	0	4
TMCC	11	0	1
WNC	6	0	5
NSHE Total	51	9	18

Source: NSHE Distance Education Directors

The ability to meet the increasing demand for online education is an important element to consider as the NSHE works to accomplish its mission of educating Nevada's citizens. NSHE institutions currently provide 50 online degrees and 6 certificate programs as an alternative means of achieving a college education. The following table identifies the number of existing online degrees, certificate programs, and the number of degrees planned for the near future. The future degrees will be operational by 2009.

The range of subjects for the online offerings include areas of study such as a PhD in nursing education; master's degrees in hospitality administration, justice management; bachelor's degrees in social sciences, criminal justice, education; and certificates in education administration, computing technology, hotel, restaurant, and casino management. Beyond the independent offerings, NSHE institutions also work collaboratively to offer online degrees

Student Demographics

Demographic information includes gender, ethnicity, age, residency, enrollment status, and academic class standing compared to the NSHE general population and with institution specific data. Table 3, again from the NSHE *Distance Education Performance Indicator*, displays a comparison of distance education students to the general NSHE population, by residency, gender and age. More detailed information on each of these data points will follow.

Table 4

Enrollment Comparison: Residency, Gender, Age
Fall 2007

	Distance Education	vs.	All Students
Nevada Residents	85%		86%
Female Students	67%		55%
Non-traditional Students (25 & older)	44%		46%

Source: NSHE Course Taxonomy File and Data Warehouse

The residency of distance education students mirrors that of the general NSHE population. The

number of distance education students age 25 or older also closely mirrors that of the general NSHE population. However, distance education students are more likely to be female.

The following chart and table demonstrate the ethnicity of distance education students, both in general and by institution.

Chart 4

NSHE Distance Education Ethnicity
Percent Distribution
Fall 2007
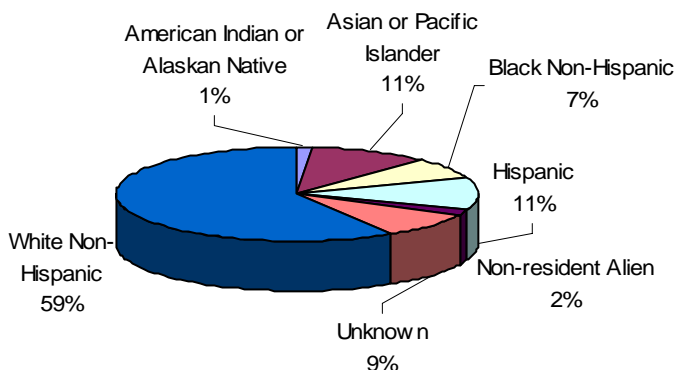
Source: NSHE Institutional Research

Table 5

Institutional Distance Education Enrollment by Ethnicity
Fall 2007

	UNR	UNLV	NSC	CSN	GBC	TMCC	WNC	NSHE
American Indian or Alaskan Native	1%	1%	1%	1%	4%	2%	3%	1%
Asian or Pacific Islander	5%	14%	10%	15%	1%	6%	2%	11%
Black Non-Hispanic	3%	9%	8%	11%	1%	3%	1%	7%
Hispanic	7%	9%	16%	13%	10%	10%	6%	11%
Non-resident Alien	2%	7%	0%	0%	0%	1%	0%	2%
Unknown	11%	12%	15%	8%	5%	6%	12%	9%
White Non-Hispanic	70%	48%	51%	52%	77%	74%	76%	59%

Source: NSHE Institutional Research

A greater proportion of distance education students are white, non-Hispanic. The rates reported above reflect only those students who chose to report their ethnicity.

The following chart and table demonstrate the percent distribution by age of distance education students, as well as the average age by institution.

Chart 5

NSHE Distance Education Enrollment by Age
Percent Distribution
Fall 2007
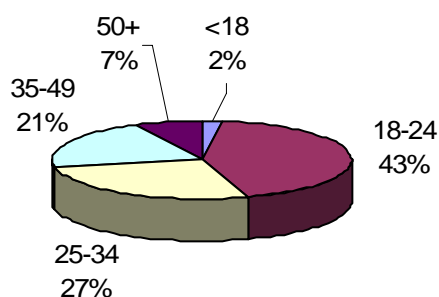
Source: NSHE Institutional Research

More students (43 percent) enrolled in distance education fall into the 18-24 year old group, followed by the 25-34 year old group at 27 percent. Combined, these two age groups make up 70 percent of the enrollment in distance education. It is somewhat surprising to see only 2.1 percent of students enrolled in distance education are under 18 years old, especially when considering the dual enrollment policy between the NSHE and high schools in Nevada. Distance education courses may be offered via the internet at a cost of only $25.00 per course to Nevada high school students.

Table 6

Average Age of Distance Education Students, by Institution
Fall 2007

UNR	UNLV	NSC	CSN	GBC	TMCC	WNC
26.4	25.8	26.9	27.3	27	26.6	29.2

Source: NSHE Institutional Research

The average age of distance education students ranges from age 26 at UNLV to 29 at WNC.

The following charts demonstrate the enrollment of distance education students by residency.

Chart 6

NSHE Distance Education by Residency
Percent Distribution
Fall 2007

Non-Resident
15%
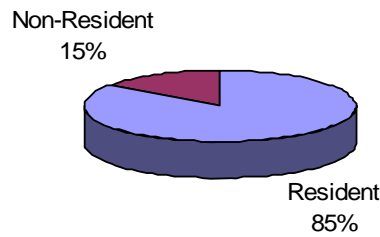
Resident
85%

Source: NSHE Institutional Research

Chart 7

Residency of Distance Education Students by Institution
Fall 2007
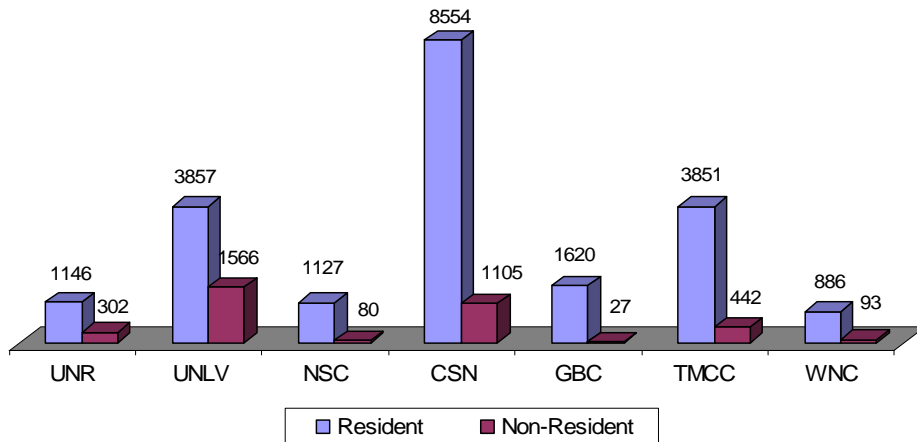
Source: NSHE Institutional Research
Note: Numbers will not add to System total as institutional records are duplicated due to students enrolling in more than one institution.

At 85 percent, the enrollment in distance education courses by Nevada residents demonstrates a couple of issues. First, there appears to be an untapped market of out-of-state students that could be reached to optimize enrollment in our distance education courses. Secondly, as other competing institutions also increase their distance education efforts, we can expect that out-of-state institutions will increasingly target Nevada students for recruitment purposes. NSHE colleges and universities must prepare for this developing market or risk the possibility of losing Nevada residents to other institutions.

The following chart and table demonstrate the enrollment of students by full and part-time status.

Chart 8

**NSHE Distance Education by
Full and Part-time Enrollment
Percent Distribution
Fall 2007**
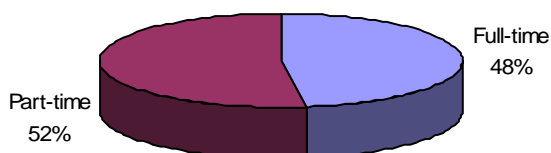
Full-time
48%

Part-time
52%

Source: NSHE Institutional Research
Note: Numbers will not add to System total as institutional records are duplicated due to students enrolling in more than one institution.

Table 7

**Institutional Distance Education Enrollments, Full versus Part-time
Fall 2007**

Institution	# Full-time	% Full-time	# Part-time	% Part-time
UNR	1,038	72%	410	28%
UNLV	3,786	70%	1,637	30%
NSC	637	53%	570	47%
CSN	3,692	38%	5,967	62%
GBC	641	39%	1,006	61%
TMCC	1,414	33%	2,879	67%
WNC	285	29%	694	71%

Source: NSHE Institutional Research

At NSHE institutions as a whole, students who enroll in distance education are almost evenly split between full-time and part-time status. With 48 percent of distance education students enrolled full-time, this shows the incorporation of distance education as a normalized method of instruction. It is noteworthy that a higher percentage of distance education students are enrolled full-time as compared to the NSHE general population, thus dispelling any notions that the bulk of distance education students are part-time. Additionally, the percentages of full-time and part-time students at the universities and community colleges are directly opposite – this is in keeping with the enrollment patterns of the general NSHE population.

The following chart and table demonstrate enrollment of NSHE distance education students by class standing.

Chart 9

NSHE Distance Education Enrollment by Class Standing
Percent Distribution
Fall 2007
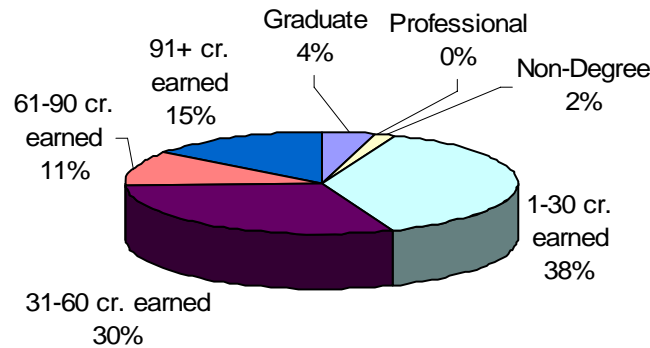
Source: NSHE Institutional Research

Table 8

Institutional Distance Education Enrollment by Class Standing
Fall 2007

|	UNR	UNLV	NSC	CSN	GBC	TMCC	WNC	NSHE
Non-degree	19	59	265	0	0	31	85	428
1-30 cr. earned	109	214	228	4,746	844	2,662	619	9,204
31-60 cr. earned	242	600	167	4,913	330	969	202	7,281
61-90 cr. earned	302	1,150	235	0	242	631	73	2,615
91+ cr. earned	545	2,569	311	0	231	0	0	3,654
Graduate	229	831	1	0	0	0	0	1,056
Professional	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	2

Source: NSHE Institutional Research
Note: Numbers will not add to System total as institutional records are duplicated due to students enrolling in more than one institution.

Most distance education enrollment occurs within the first two years of college attendance. Throughout the system, undergraduates with less than 60 credits earned accounted for 68 percent of students enrolled in distance education.

As a further demonstration of the high utilization of distance education as a method of instruction, the following chart provides a snapshot of the participation rate by students toward

the end of their degree timeframe. More NSHE students are gaining experience in using technology-mediated instruction through enrollment in distance education courses by the time they complete a degree.

Chart 10

Four-Year Institution Seniors (U04) and Community College Sophomores (U02) Taking A Distance Education Course at Any Point in Their Academic History Fall 2007

Institution	Percentage
UNR	30.6%
UNLV	40.5%
NSC	88.1%
CSN	57.4%
GBC	72.1%
TMCC	66.7%
WNC	52.9%
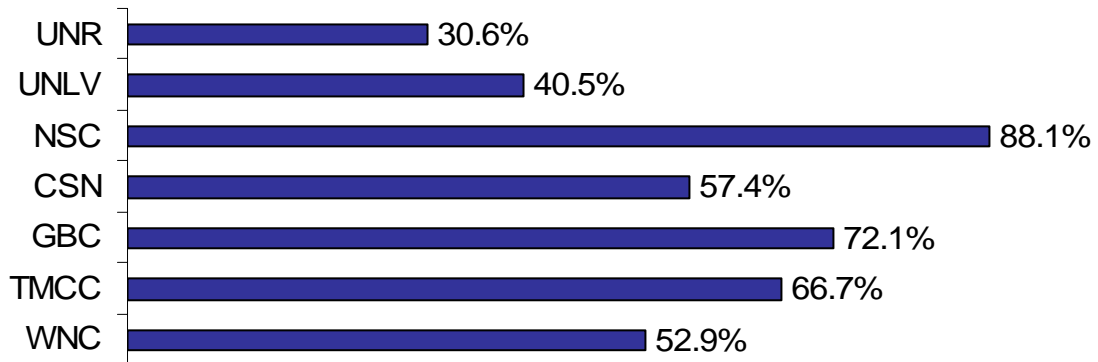
Source: NSHE Institutional Research

In conclusion, from the previous data, the most frequent characteristics of a distance education student within NSHE are female, white/non-Hispanic, enrolled part-time, in the 18-24 year age range, a Nevada resident, and an undergraduate student with less than 60 credits earned.

Institution Updates

The following information is provided directly by the Distance Education Directors.

<u>University of Nevada, Reno</u>

The University of Nevada, Reno has a Teaching, Learning, Technology staff that is very active in training faculty to teach online. More than 1,000 class sections each semester have technology components. Tech support for the online students through the Knowledge Center is excellent.

The Independent Learning Program on the University of Nevada, Reno campus offers approximately 125 classes each year completely online and an additional 60 classes in other formats, described below.

Highlights of this program, beyond the high quality classes offered include:

- Three formats to choose from: Semester-based online classes, open-enrollment online classes and open-enrollment print-based classes.
- Extensive service center for students
- Welcome "WebPackets" of information are given to every student and discuss class requirements, deadlines, technical requirements and other important points about the class;
- Students purchase textbooks and additional course materials online or in person, 7 am-7 pm Monday – Friday. UNR is working on improving the online service to be 24-7 and should have that up and running by the middle of November.
- Students can contact UNR with questions 7 am-7 pm Monday through Friday and via email 18 hours a day.
- Online class tutorial sessions and additional tech support are conducted as needed.
- Tutoring is available on campus for local students in distance education classes.
- Examinations are mailed to approved test proctors in the U.S. and internationally. Local students take exams in the Independent Learning testing room, which has laptops and internet access for any tests that are taken online on WebCampus.

Classes through Independent Learning have always required supervised examinations for all online and distance education students, regardless of where they live in the United States or abroad. This is especially important now that the Higher Education Act has signed into law legislation that requires accrediting agencies offering distance education "to have processes through which the institution establishes that the student who registers in a distance education course or program is the same student who participates in and completes the program and receives the academic credit."

An area in which UNR could improve is offering complete graduate degrees online.

University of Nevada, Las Vegas

Currently UNLV distance education offers over 1000 courses online annually, which assist Nevada students in the completion of all undergraduate degrees and some graduate degrees offered at UNLV. UNLV distance education offered 1478 sections with over 26,000 annual distance education enrollments in 2008, engendering 9645 graduate hours and 61,040 undergraduate hours.

UNLV distance education has captioned all streaming videos since 2005, which are used by distance education courses and sometimes the instructor's face to face campus sections. The shared use of distance education created materials utilizes scarce UNLV resources and upgrades educational effectiveness across the campus. Distance education staff is comprised of five instructional designers, who assist faculty one-on-one with translating their traditional courses into effective online courses. The six person visualization team creates graphics, videos, animations, interactive exercises and other visualization approaches to clarify educational concepts. For example, a Criminal Justice instructor normally takes her students to the jail. Since her students are all over the United States, distance education created a 3D virtual jail in which her students can experience a jail cell.

In January 2009, a Masters in Educational Leadership will be offered in which a student can be prepared to meet all state of Nevada requirements for an endorsement as a school or program administrator. This can be completed within two years completely online.

By the end of 2009, undergraduate degrees will be available completely online through UNLV distance education in Criminal Justice, History and Public Administration.

Currently the following UNLV degrees are available completely online:

- Ph.D. in Nursing, Focus in Education
- M.S. Nursing
  - o Specialty in Family Practice, Pediatrics or Education
- M.S. Nursing through distance education in St. Jude/Philippines program is not state funded
- M.S. in Hospitality Administration
- B.S. in Social Sciences
- In collaboration with Nevada State College, an RN (Registered Nurse) to BSN (Bachelor of Science in Nursing) is offered.

In addition to captioning all distance education instructional videos, students are supported with 24/7 tutoring through Smarthinking and 24/7/365 technical support through Presidium, both which are paid for by distance education with the distance education student fees. Library and general campus support are available to all distance education students. The next area which needs to be offered to distance education students is psychological counseling.

Nevada State College

Universal Deployment of Online Technologies

Since the Spring 2007 term, all NSC courses, regardless of delivery mode, have a WebCampus component—called *Blackboard Vista 4*, NSC's learning management system. Moreover, to give students easy access to essential course materials and communication, all WebCampus course shells are based on mandated NSC templates. Each WebCampus template contains links to Library/Research Resources, Student Services, and Tutoring Links as well as degree program links.

Thus, classroom based courses must contain communication, grade book, and syllabus elements in WebCampus. Likewise, hybrid courses contain the same basic elements plus online assignments, discussion, and testing, as needed to sustain outside class learning activities. Finally, all online courses must contain all essential content and testing materials, including print materials, media, Internet links, and learning activities. This deployment strategy advances the technology skills of our students and their overall success in learning online.

Student Learning with Technology Orientation and Support

Building on the universal deployment of WebCampus, all students admitted to NSC are enrolled automatically in an online course called *Student WebCampus Orientation*. The course includes all of the WebCampus learning tools with related learning exercises. In addition, every WebCampus course contains a mini-orientation called *WebCampus Tour*. Students also have access to 24/7 telephone and online user support for WebCampus and related technologies, such as e-mail and MS Office Suite applications.

Teaching with Technology Support and Training for Faculty

Instructional support and training initiatives are essential to effective teaching and learning. Since the fall of 2006, Nevada State College's Office of Instructional Technology has invested in the development of 1) comprehensive, fully online "teaching with technology" workshops; and, 2) real-time instructional resources, available "any-time/any-where," making course design and development resources available wherever and whenever faculty need them.

With their first teaching assignment, full- and part-time instructors are enrolled in NSC's *Faculty Resource Center*. The *FRC* provides 24/7 access to animated demos, manuals, and tip sheets for all of the teaching technologies used at NSC. In addition, instructors have access to a moderated Faculty Lounge where they can post questions and exchange teaching tips with colleagues.

All instructors also have access to seven online workshops on more advanced course design and development tools and through which they can rotate over several months, as needed. Workshops engage faculty in hands-on training using practice courses in which they can design and build assignments, assessments, graded discussions, course materials, and media.

College of Southern Nevada

The College of Southern Nevada will launch the Online Campus with the implementation of Angel as its new Learning Management System on December 15, 2008. The CSN Online Campus will meet the needs of the 100% online learners by providing all of the courses, programs, and services that are commonly provided to students attending traditional on campus courses and programs. The CSN Online Campus has nineteen Associate Degrees, seven Certificates of Achievement, one Certificate of Completion, and the junior and senior years of the Bachelor of Science in Dental Hygiene completely online.

In support of the mission of the College of Southern Nevada, the CSN Online Campus provides access to a quality, comprehensive teaching and learning experience by offering innovative educational programs, services and lifelong learning opportunities for a diverse population. The CSN Online Campus was named specifically to illustrate that choosing an online education at CSN is just like choosing to take classes at one of the existing campuses. It is of the upmost importance to the CSN faculty and staff that all of the values and academic quality associated with CSN will be maintained with the Online Campus. The Strategic Plan for the CSN Online Campus describes CSN's direction for its Online Campus through the adoption of five goals that are designed to move the institution toward its future vision:

- Goal 1: Create a stable and effective organizational structure that defines roles, responsibilities, accountability, and clearly supports increased communications.
- Goal 2: Actively pursue funding to support the CSN Online Campus.
- Goal 3: Continue to systematically improve existing technological infrastructure and plan for future needs.
- Goal 4: Provide increased access to courses and services for an expanded student population to reach their personal and academic goals.
- Goal 5: Achieve national prominence for our academic quality and innovative programs and student support services.

The implementation of the CSN Online Campus will be an ongoing activity that will continue through Academic Year 2010-2011. The launch of the CSN Online Campus has been supported by a U.S. Department of Education Grant in the amount of $718,229. The funding from this grant supports the following activities:

1. Training on the new Angel Learning Management System for faculty, staff, and students.
2. Launching the central CSN Online Student Services presence based on best practices.
3. Launching a web based training and orientation program for faculty who teach online.
4. Launching a web based student orientation to online learning.
5. Meeting the unmet community needs for online learning.

The full implementation of the CSN Online Campus will be a challenge based on the uncertain budget situation in the future.

Great Basin College

Great Basin College's WebCampus continues to grow at an exceptional rate. The WebCampus has seen a 142% increase in FTE from Fall 05 to Fall 07 and continues to follow these growth patterns. GBC's WebCampus consists of two types of courses, Internet and LiveNet. Internet courses are fully online asynchronous courses (time and place independent). LiveNet courses utilizing the Internet classroom have an additional component of a scheduled online synchronous meeting including the instructor and students (place independent). LiveNet is fully interactive with voice, images, and video. It's interesting to note LiveNet courses have shown a 5-8% higher retention rate than Internet alone. GBC's collaboration with System Computing Services is essential to providing high quality online courses to all students in our 62, 000 mile service area and beyond. SCS hosts and provides maintenance for GBC's Internet course servers, a service GBC would be unable to do without this collaboration.

Great Basin College's Interactive Video also continues to grow. Interactive video (IAV) has seen a 33% increase in FTE from Fall 05 to Fall 07. Usage has also increased by 9.2%, going from 7,703 hours (4,188 sessions) in FY 2006-2007 to 8,424 hours (4,657 sessions) in FY 2007-2008. At the present time, Great Basin College's use of the state interactive video network accounts for 38.5% of total network traffic and over 62% of all sessions categorized as "Classes Credited". Beyond the seven regional and satellite campuses, classes are delivered via IAV to eleven high school locations within GBC's service area and to an additional 6 educational institutions statewide.

GBC's Interactive Video underwent a partial reorganization in the Fall of 2006, coinciding with an overall expansion of classroom capacity and class delivery. GBC's assumption of responsibility for the Pahrump Valley Center campus included the installation of three new IAV classrooms in 2006, one in 2007, and four in 2008. During this time period, all of the Elko IAV classrooms were been upgraded with SmartBoard or Starboard interactive tablet systems and with DVD recording capabilities. In 2008, interactive video was also installed in the new Pahrump Basin Building campus. Also in 2006, GBC installed IAV capabilities in a new modular building in West Wendover and facilitated the installation of IAV rooms at the College of Southern Nevada (Henderson), Truckee Meadows Community College (Reno), and Western Nevada College (Carson City) campuses as part of a collaborative effort with sister institutions for the Industrial Energy Efficiency grant program.

Distance Education degree offerings: GBC offers all the courses needed on-line for the following degrees: Associate of General Studies (AGS), Associate of Arts (AA), Associate of Science (AS), Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN), Bachelor of Applied Science (BAS) in Land Surveying/Geomatics. The following GBC degree programs can be completed through a combination of on-line and interactive video classes: Associate of Applied Science Degrees in Business Administration and Criminal Justice. GBC's general education requirements for all certificates and degrees are available on-line.

Truckee Meadows Community College

Accomplishments/Best Practices

Online Degrees/Creative Approaches: The TMCC WebCollege is been charged with improving access to higher education. TMCC currently offers eleven different degree combinations completely online and has experienced an annual enrollment growth rate of more than fifteen percent. Currently, TMCC WebCollege is developing a fast-track online degree program (courses offered in a 5-week online format) which will target nontraditional working adults and will offer an accelerated solution for degree completion. Three initial emphases have been identified: Associate of Arts (AA) in Business, AA in Criminal Justice, and AA in Administrative Professional. The degree program is slated to be launched in Spring 2010 and will feature credit for lifelong learning experience (where appropriate), a student academic plan, fostering student learning communities, and will focus on degree completion for nontraditional students.

Student Services: TMCC has been committed to meeting the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities requirement that a student receive an equivalent level of support regardless of the course method of delivery. It is now possible for an online student at TMCC to receive ALL needed college services virtually. In 2007, TMCC recognized Aubrey White as its Outstanding Distance Education student. Aubrey completed his AA with a Business Emphasis (60 credits/August 2005 – December 2007) entirely online without ever coming to campus. Effective with the 2007 Fall term, TMCC added 24/7 technical support for distance education students and faculty. Students at TMCC can now apply for admission, seek financial aid, receive counseling and advising, register for classes, pay for classes, purchase textbooks, take classes, access the library, receive tutoring assistance, receive technical assistance, and check their grades/records – all online.

Challenges

Accessibility: A major challenge facing the TMCC WebCollege is ensuring full compliance with Section 504 and 508/ADA accessibility. The WebCollege adopted an ADA-compliant Learning Management System (LMS) – Angel – and recently received a grant from ATT to explore the use of Echo 360 technologies to improve access/support for distance education and traditional classes. This technology captures a class presentation/lecture, and allows for automatic conversion to video streaming – it also sorts the content of the presentation/lecture into modules (based on recognition of a change in topic). This technology will also improve our ability to caption.

Improving Student Success: Like most other colleges and universities, overall online course retention continues to lag 8-10% behind traditional course retention. The TMCC WebCollege is working to improve overall online course retention and created a faculty advisory committee to develop appropriate standards and expectations, is reviewing current courses to improve design and consistency, and will adopt quality standards for new course development. The goal is to first match the retention level for traditional classes, and ultimately, to strive to "raise the bar" in the retention of students in both traditional and distance education classes.

Western Nevada College

Several years ago increasing online enrollment proved challenging for existing personnel responsible for online learning to login, successfully navigate class software and complete necessary computer configurations.

In order to provide a more robust support structure, WNC's Library & Media Services reference librarians assumed responsibility as the first contact for students enrolled in online classes. Reference librarians staff both a reference desk and a phone line for 60-65 hours a week, providing for both evening and weekend coverage. Their primary functions are helping with login procedures, basic browser configuration issues and other common student problems. When referring students to other areas of the college for assistance, reference staff maintain contact with the student to insure their issues are resolved. Computer or browser problems that cannot be easily resolved are referred to the college's Computing Services personnel.

This arrangement has worked well over the past several years, with a record number of over 550 calls for assistance handled in the first weeks of class for the Fall 2008 semester. Students new to online learning frequently require time-consuming assistance. Reference librarians are well trained in dealing with people, problem solving and in identifying the appropriate college department necessary to solve student issues. An additional advantage is the proximity of the library's public access computers. Students requesting assistance in person are able to have a librarian sit down with them at a library computer and guide them through the process of learning online software. Reference librarians have traditionally supported a wide variety of software, web browsers and online applications. These skills have proved to be well suited to the online learning support role. Existing workload patterns also favor this approach. Typically the least demand for reference services occurs at the beginning of each semester. This is the time of highest demand for student online class assistance. Providing this assistance has proved to be a very efficient use of our reference librarians.

This model worked so well that the college Web Coordinator was reassigned to report to the Director of Library and Information Technology and his office was moved to the library at the Carson City Campus. An additional benefit was the availability of the library's instructional computer lab, which is now utilized for web training for faculty and staff. The combination of the two functions served to further increase a developing synergy of what are essentially complimentary academic support functions.

Support for Web Testing
A difficult issue facing online learning is provision for testing. A variety of approaches have been utilized at WNC, including online tests, paper testing at designed sites and turning in assignments via "Turn It In", an online system that checks for plagiarism. The college recently purchased lock down browser software and is in the process of identifying testing sites across the service area for software installation. A small lab fee charged to online students will be utilized to provide for test proctors and expanded testing hours during midterms and finals at locations throughout the service area. Testing is a faculty driven function and WNC's goal is to establish a variety of secure, authenticated methods located at sites throughout the college's service area for faculty to utilize for their classes.

Update on *2004-05 Distance Education Report* Recommendations

The *2004-05 Distance Education Report* made several recommendations designed to meet the needs of the new higher education learning environment using distance education. The following progress to date is provided by the NSHE Distance Education Directors:

Infrastructure

The 2004-05 Distance Education Report made two recommendations in the area of infrastructure:

> *1) Lack of a sound technological infrastructure makes it difficult to support a healthy, pedagogically sound online program. Fees added to the cost of online classes are in most cases inadequate to independently support that structure. Each institution should develop a sound financial plan to support distance education infrastructure needs.*
>
> 2007-08 Status
>
> As a system, there is still a need to develop a sound financial plan to support distance education infrastructure needs. Some individual institutions have made some progress in meeting this recommendation. For example, WNC used online fees, general student technology fee funds and year end money to fund software and services such as Blackboard, Horizon Live, Turn It In and video streaming hosting. An operating budget for online learning averages about $7,400 per annum. That said, there is still significant work to be accomplished to have *all* NSHE institutions accomplish this recommendation. This has become much more difficult in the current budget situation that is facing the state of Nevada.

> *2) Marketing of distance education and use of the statewide online directory of distance education courses should be increased. The online catalog is hosted at System Computing Services and each campus is responsible for entering its classes each semester. Visit the online catalog at http://www.scsr.nevada.edu/disted.*
>
> 2007-08 Status
>
> The Distance Education Directors, working with System Computing Services and the NSHE System Administration office, revised and updated the NSHE Online Course Directory. Major improvements included the automation of uploading class schedule from each institution to the Directory, redesign of the site, listing of online degrees available from each NSHE institution, and resources to assist students interested in taking an online course or completing a degree.

Instructional Designers

2004-05 Recommendation

Instructional designers are needed to support faculty in converting courses from a traditional format to a distance education format. Distance education courses save the institution in plant costs, but there are increased staffing costs for faculty and student support services that must be considered.

2007-08 Status

There is some progress on individual campuses in the hiring of instructional designers but it still remains an issue throughout the system. The current budget situation is affecting the ability of institutions to hire more instructional designers.

State-Wide Coordinated Effort

2004-05 Recommendation

Greater focus and coordination among institutions will enable successful sharing of best practices and support. In addition, statewide grant writing for distance education could be very successful in meeting the needs of NSHE students.

2007-08 Status

The Distance Education Directors hold monthly meetings via Horizon Wimba with participation from the NSHE System Administration office. As a result of these meetings there is now a statewide consortium for Smarthinking, a 24x7 online tutoring company. At the present time, the members of the Smarthinking consortium are the College of Southern Nevada, Nevada State College, Truckee Meadows Community College, and University of Nevada, Las Vegas. The consortium negotiated a consistent pricing approach for each institution and locked in the price for a two year period. The Distance Education Directors are also currently discussing each institution's approach to ensuring and improving the quality of online offerings.

Review and Update of Board of Regent Policies

2004-05 Recommendation

There have been many advances in distance education since the last time the Board policies relating to distance education were examined (1999) A review is recommended.

2007-08 Status

The Distance Education Directors working with the Chancellor's Office revised and updated the NSHE policies related to distance education. These revisions and updates were presented to the Board of Regents and approved.

<u>Student Services</u>

2004-05 Recommendation

A review of services provided distance education students should occur to determine if the equivalency of services requirement from accreditation is being met.

2007-08 Status

At all institutions, students may apply for admission, register for classes, pay fees via credit card and apply for financial aid via the web. The Distance Education Directors met with Disability Resource Center directors as part of the effort to advance student services and focus on compliance as an ongoing issue. The budget situation in Nevada may affect each institution's success in meeting this recommendation. That said, the 2004-05 recommendation should continue. It is hoped that completion of the Student Services module within the iNtegrate project will assist in comparable services for all students.

<u>Support Staff</u>

2004-05 Recommendation

Distance education requires a great deal of faculty time to develop solid, educational experiences for our students. Interaction between faculty, students, and content is stressed with a variety of activities, which enhance critical thinking and active learning. These experiences require a great deal of planning and faculty support by the distance education staff. As the demand for distance education grows, so does the demand for support staff.

2007-08 Status

The 2004-05 recommendation should continue. The budget situation in Nevada may affect individual institutions' success in meeting this recommendation.

<u>Accessibility</u>

2004-05 Recommendation

All of the broadcast and streaming video lectures should be close captioned.

2007-08 Status

In a statewide meeting Distance Education Directors and Disability Resource Center personnel discussed the current status regarding Section 504 and Section 508 ADA compliance. Truckee Meadows Community College is developing policies and practices for Accessible Electronic Information (AEI) which will be shared with the other NSHE campuses. The budget situation in Nevada may affect individual institutions' success in meeting this recommendation. The 2004-05 recommendation should continue.

Faculty Development

2004-05 Recommendation

Faculty need to be trained on how to best utilize distance education technologies.

2007-08 Status

The budget situation in Nevada may affect individual institutions' success in meeting this recommendation. The 2004-05 recommendation should continue.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Distance education is a rapidly changing and evolving field that is playing a more prominent role in higher education and which is expected to continue growing and changing. As students and faculty increasingly expect and demand the opportunities and services provided by distance education, NSHE colleges and universities must be progressive in meeting these emerging challenges. Through a discussion of and implementation of the recommendations provided, NSHE will continue to play a more positive and proactive role in providing the highest quality education for Nevada's students. The NSHE Distance Education Directors make the following recommendations:

Resource Development

> It is imperative that NSHE and its member institutions look to alternative funding sources to support distance education initiatives in Nevada. Grant funding from both private foundations and the federal government should be researched and developed. A possible statewide approach to grant applications might prove beneficial.

Enrollment Trends

> The demand for online courses from the community continues to increase while the competition from private for-profit institutions also increases. NSHE should examine the factors impacting online enrollment including those limiting the opportunities for students to enroll in online courses and develop a strategy for meeting the demand and the competition for online students.

Faculty Development

> This recommendation is continued from the 2004-05 report. There is a continual need to support faculty development in teaching distance education courses. Technology changes rapidly and faculty need to keep current with the technology in order to offer the best learning environment for Nevada residents.

Collaboration

> In a time of shrinking financial resources it is more imperative that NSHE institutions continue to collaborate on many initiatives, including distance education. There is a formal statewide Distance Education Directors group with a chair, chair-elect and System Administration representative, serving as the coordinating body for this collaboration.

Accessibility

> This recommendation is continued from the 2004-05 report. There is still a need to provide close captioning for all videos used in distance education courses. There is also a need to review all existing courses to ensure that they are compliant with Section 504 and Section 508 of the American with Disabilities Act. Policies and practices developed by Truckee Meadows Community College appear to meet these criteria. In addition, each institution should schedule a meeting each semester between Distance Education staff

and Disability Resource Center staff to discuss progress on meeting accessibility goals and to develop new goals if needed.

Student Services

This recommendation is continued from the 2004-05 report. CSN recently contracted with the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WCET) for an audit of its online student services. The results of this audit will be shared with NSHE institutions and may be used as a template for improving online student services across the state.

Online Degrees/Creative Approaches

Because of many environmental factors, including the high cost of fuel, students are looking for ways to complete their entire degree online. While there are currently some NSHE degrees offered completely online, institutions should seek creative approaches to developing more completely online degrees, including more collaboration among the individual institutions.

Staffing – Support Staff and Instructional Designers

This recommendation is continued from the 2004-05 report and combines two recommendations into one. This recommendation should become a priority for institutions once the State is able to move beyond the current funding issues. As enrollments grow, there is a need to add more staff to support the growth and to provide quality and timely support.

Infrastructure

This recommendation is continued from the 2004-05 report and should become a priority for institutions once the current funding issues are resolved. The first issue to examine is the resources availability for each institution related to streaming video. Many online courses now incorporate video, and institutions should ensure that the infrastructure is sufficient to support streaming video.

Interactive Video Capability

Most of the institutions in NSHE do not use the interactive video to deliver distance education courses. Working with the institutions that still rely on interactive video, System Computing Services and the System should examine the feasibility of supplementing interactive video with webcast/webinar software that could be used to deliver courses to remote locations. This would enable remote students to stay at home for this type of distance education course and not have to travel to a physical location.

Western Nevada College and Great Basin College are heavy users of Interactive Video and largely service the rural areas of our state where high speed Internet capability is often not available or unreliable. The Nevada Net system is a well developed network that both institutions rely on to deliver courses in these areas. NSHE institutions should continue to examine and develop new teaching technologies as they become suitable to rural areas.

References

Calvert, Jocelyn. (2005). Distance education at the crossroads. *Distance Education*. 26(2), pp. 227-238.

Hiltz, S. and Turoff, M. (2005). The evolution of online learning and the revolution in higher education. *Communication of the ACM*. 48(10) 59-64.

Instructional Technology Council (2007). *2007 Distance Education Survey Results*. P 3.

Saba, Farhad. (August, 2005). Critical issues in distance education: a report from the United States. *Distance Education*.26(2), 255-272.

Sloan-C. (October 2007). *Online Nation: Five Years of Growth in Online Learning*. P 1.

Appendix

Board of Regents' *Handbook* Title 4,
Chapter 14 Section 11.

Section 11. Distance Education

The term "distance education" means a formal educational process in which the majority of the instruction occurs when the student and instructor are separated by geographic distance or time. Instruction may be synchronous or asynchronous. Distance education may employ correspondence study, audio, video, or other electronically mediated technologies.

NSHE credit and noncredit courses may be offered through the use of distance education technologies. The following guidelines shall be used to assure academic quality for distance education courses offered for academic credit applicable toward a certificate or degree:

1. In accordance with the appropriate standards for institutional accreditation, the quality of distance education courses must be equal to or exceed that of on-campus courses. Distance education courses are subject to all applicable institutional policies and procedures to ensure quality.

2. Faculty members assigned to distance education courses may be provided with incentives, as deemed appropriate by the institution.

3. Each NSHE institution will be expected to provide appropriate instructional support to ensure quality of its distance education course offerings.

4. Each distance education course shall promote and exhibit current best practices and procedures for distance learning. This involves pedagogy, design, and delivery, including but not limited to adequate provisions for instructor training, instructor-student communication, assessment, and equivalent access to all appropriate student services that are available to on-campus students, including such services as academic advising, counseling, library and other learning resources, tutoring services, and financial aid.

5. Each distance education course must provide the opportunity for timely interaction between the student and the instructor, or a member of the instructional team responsible for the course, regarding the student's progress. This may include (1) an orientation session or sessions at the beginning of the course; (2) periodically scheduled guidance or tutoring sessions during the semester either on an individual basis or in a group setting; and (3) provision for access by the student for advice or consultation with the faculty member. These interactions may occur either as traditional face-to-face sessions or may be assisted through technology.

6. Distance education materials produced outside or within the institution must be evaluated and selected in accordance with standard instructional procedures for course development and instruction.

7. Campus Service Areas:

Geographic service areas are appropriate for interactive video when designating the institution with responsibility for 1.) establishing and maintaining interactive video sites in an area and 2.) coordinating the receipt of programs using interactive video with offering institutions. Geographic service areas do not apply to web-based instruction. If an agreement is entered into by two or more NSHE institutions for delivery into the host institution's campus service area, these restrictions do not apply.

College of Southern Nevada: Clark, Lincoln, and Esmeralda counties. CSN and GBC serve Nye County.

Great Basin College: Elko, Eureka, Humboldt, Lander and White Pine counties. CSN and GBC serve Nye County.

Truckee Meadows Community College: The greater urban area of Reno-Sparks, and Incline Village.

Western Nevada College: Storey, Carson City, Douglas, Lyon, Churchill, Pershing and Mineral counties and the rural areas of Washoe County, with the exception of Incline Village.

Nevada State College, Henderson: The southern portion of the state including Clark and Lincoln counties. UNLV, NSCH and UNR serve Esmeralda, Nye and White Pine counties. Within Nye and White Pine counties, UNLV, NSCH, and UNR serve Tonopah and Ely, with NSCH and UNLV serving all parts south of a line joining the two cities.

University of Nevada, Las Vegas: The southern portion of the state including Clark and Lincoln counties. UNLV, NSCH and UNR serve Esmeralda, Nye and White Pine counties. Within Nye and White Pine counties, UNLV, NSCH, and UNR serve Tonopah and Ely, with UNLV and NSCH serving all parts south of a line joining the two cities.

University of Nevada, Reno: The northern portion of the state including Washoe, Douglas, Carson City, Storey, Lyon, Humboldt, Pershing, Churchill, Mineral, Elko, Lander, Eureka. UNLV, NSCH and UNR serve Esmeralda, Nye and White Pine counties. Within Nye and White Pine counties, UNLV, NSCH, and UNR serve Tonopah and Ely, with UNR serving all parts north of a line joining the two cities.

8. The institution offering a distance education course will receive the student FTE's enrolled in the course. If the course incurs costs to partner institutions *(e.g., marketing, registration, technology support)*, a "sharing protocol" should be completed prior to the course being offered to identify costs that must be reimbursed among parties.

9. Each campus will establish a protocol for determining costs or services to be paid by each partner when courses or programs are shared among institutions. The protocol will include, but not be limited to, sharing of special student fees, payment of facilitators and other services, responsibilities for marketing the course and recruiting students, advising, and other support. The protocol will be updated regularly.

10. Distance education courses will be developed in accordance with the following principles:
    a. Address state needs;
    b. Operate programs collaboratively and share resources, if appropriate;
    c. Base program decisions on documented student or citizen need;
    d. Work with constituent groups *(e.g., K-12 school districts, employers, industry representatives)* to identify and prioritize the most pressing educational needs;
    e. Use a combination of technologies, as appropriate to support curricular needs and student learning styles;
    f. Ensure that academic plans influence the expansion of the technical infrastructure;
    g. Provide essential support services to students;
    h. Build institutional and system capacity to address more needs through distance learning;
    i. Be accountable to the Legislature and the public for their use of state resources and the quality and appropriateness of their services; and
    j. Partner with or broker programs from out-of-state institutions, where appropriate.

11. Each campus may develop policies and procedures for the approval of distance education courses and programs.

12. When institutional funds are used to purchase distance education equipment, that equipment is owned by the institution. Institutions accepting ownership of distance education equipment also accept responsibility for maintenance and service of that equipment.

    When distance education equipment owned by an institution is located at a non-NSHE site or such equipment is shared with non-NSHE institutions, a Memorandum of Understanding *(MOU)* shall be completed. The MOU will clearly specify the responsibilities of each party and what level of funding each party provides to support the equipment and related charges.

13. When distance education equipment is purchased by System Computing Services (SCS) for the support of NSHE institutions, the ownership of that equipment shall be retained by SCS, in addition to the responsibility for the maintenance, servicing, and operation of that equipment.

14. Oversight of scheduling and switching of interactive video is the responsibility of SCS. SCS will work with institutional representatives, particularly in regards to installation, connectivity, and transmission.
    (B/R 11/07)