Nevada System of Higher Education

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REPORT ON

2004 - 2005

DISTANCE EDUCATION

JANUARY 2006

Prepared by the Office of Academic and Student Affairs

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Nevada System of Higher Education

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

TABLES

CHARTS

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Executive Summary

Distance Education in the Nevada System of Higher Education has seen significant growth in recent years. The report demonstrates that students increasingly look to distance education opportunities to meet their educational needs.

- System-wide, FTE growth has risen by 209% since Fall 2001 from 1,682 to 5,134 FTE.

- Distance education enrollments continue to constitute a greater proportion of the system's overall AAFTE, growing from 4% of NSHE AAFTE in 2001-02 to 8% in 2004-05.

- Since Fall 2001, the unduplicated headcount has risen system-wide by 181%.

- From Fall 2003 to Fall 2004, system-wide distance education headcount increased by 21.9%. Nationally, distance education enrollments rose at a rate of 18.2% during the same time period (Allen and Seaman, 2005).

- The rise in distance education headcount outpaces the increase in the overall system-wide headcount, 155% to 20% respectively.

- A representative distance education student in the NSHE will be: 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.

Students are increasingly demanding and expecting distance education offerings. In order to meet the rising demand, some important elements should be examined in a state-wide 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 the state of Nevada. With the rapid population growth experienced in Nevada, there are an increasing number of students eligible for and participating in some form of higher education. The NSHE employs many successful programs to reach these students; one particularly successful method is through distance education. It is the intent of this report to assist NSHE educators in the understanding of distance education and the issues associated with it.

Simply defined, distance education is a practice where education is delivered and 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 to the Nevada Board of Regents and to the NSHE as it is one of the performance indicators used by the Board of Regents to measure its effectiveness in delivering quality education to 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 developed for this indicator instructs: "expand distance education offerings so that, on average, all students will have participated in some technology-mediated instruction prior to graduation." By measuring distance education as a performance indicator, the Board of Regents and the NSHE demonstrate their strong commitment to distance education. 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 students.

Further, providing access is another driver for offering distance education courses. Distance education is often the best means for ensuring access to higher education for rural students in particular. An online directory of distance education courses offered throughout the state is also made available thus helping assure access to all the available educational opportunities that distance education provides.

Data Source

The distance education data included herein is for state supported distance education courses only derived from the NSHE course taxonomy. Non-state supported courses, such as continuing education, are not included.

Student enrollments in NSHE courses are counted as state supported 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 budget (for a detailed definition see NSHE *Enrollment Reporting Procedures*). 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 for high support. Hybrid instruction, using various methods of instruction in addition to the traditional classroom, does not count for high support.
4. Other than any required meetings for organizational purposes, 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.
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 for high support. However, the instruction received at a site other than the traditional classroom does qualify for high support.

What are the delivery methods of distance education?

The delivery methods of distance education have evolved into the complex and sophisticated methods used today. Distance education began in the late 1800s in Chautauqua, New York through the creation of the first national book club and correspondence education movement. From correspondence (written materials sent via mail), distance education progressed in the 1920's to include radio. After World War II, distance education delivery methods further expanded to include satellite and cable technologies, but it was not until the mid-1980's when the US government decided to put the Internet at the disposal of civilian organizations that distance education moved from the sidelines to a major focus of attention in the United States (Saba, 2005).

Prior to the advent of the Internet, the delivery of distance education usually happened by one of two models: 1) correspondence and 2) audio and videoconferencing technologies to reach remote classrooms. Both models continue but have been largely replaced by online technologies that supplement or replace other media, facilitate student-teacher interaction, and introduce structured student-to-student interaction. Online technologies are attractive because they provide the opportunity to create rich learning environments consisting of multimedia resource and facilities for communication and interaction (Calvert, 2005). The term "distance education" is now becoming synonymous with non-contiguous, online learning (Calvert, 2005).

As a brief synopsis, current technologies utilized to deliver distance education include: correspondence, physical mail, and printed matter; telephone and/or audio recordings; television and/or video recordings; computer-assisted instruction; group communications (asynchronous and synchronous); the internet and multimedia materials; simulation and gaming; collaborative learning; asynchronous learning networks (ALN); collaborative knowledge systems; immersive simulations; and wireless handheld devices. (Hiltz and Turoff, 2005).

The two most prevalent technologies widely used throughout the NSHE are: cable or interactive video (IAV), and web-based courses. Through cable, students are able to view lectures as passive observers of a traditional classroom setting and may record the class for later viewing. In some instances, these classes are broadcast live allowing students to interact with the class by calling in or through an online chat-room. 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 a combination of printed and electronically delivered materials. Students interact mainly through web-based forum discussions and email.

The shift in delivery methods (from correspondence 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 faculty. The possession and utilization of digital technologies becomes one of the marketable skills that faculty will be increasingly expected to demonstrate and master.

The Contemporary Scene

The contemporary distance education scene is different from the past in a number of ways. One author highlights four such differences. First, there are more distance education providers offering online education. This has created an educational environment where increased course offerings have led to a development of niche areas of expertise. Second, institutions are targeting different types of students, extending service beyond undergraduate to graduate and professional students. Third, institutions are looking to transnational markets for students. And fourth, institutions are forming collaboratives to offer online distance education (Calvert, 2005).

Hiltz and Turoff (2005) provide additional issues that further present and define the issues related to distance education. These are:

- Face-to-face courses blended with online learning technologies and methodologies are generally rated by students as significant improvements over traditional face-to-face classes;

- Currently over 50% of US students are returning to education after work or are working now, and often have families;
- The benefit of the flexibility of being able to integrate education with the demands of work and family;
- Learning effectiveness in online (ALN) or blended courses is equal to or better than in entirely face-to-face courses;
- The value to the instructor is being able to treat all students equally, and to prepare and deliver the materials of the course as a single entity;
- The value to the organization is not having to duplicate any administrative or support function as a separate entity for distance learning; and
- The growing competitive environment in higher education and the need to provide quality online instruction as a matter of long-term survival. Students and faculty will increasingly gravitate toward institutions where online distance education is offered.

As previously mentioned, one of the master plan goals of the Board of Regents and the NSHE is that of a student-focused system. Through distance education, students can select courses and programs that can be tailored to their educational needs. This notion of student-centered learning or flexible learning arises from a perspective that views the student as central to the learning and teaching process. One interpretation of this viewpoint, that "students have the right to decide how they undertake their learning," coincides with the consumer-centered culture prevalent in our modern world (Willems, 2005).

The contemporary scene of distance education is transforming the traditional view of the role of students in higher education. Consider that more than one million American high school students are currently enrolled in courses via the Internet, up from 571,000 in 2004, and 378,000 in 2003. Incoming students will increasingly expect that higher education institutions will provide online and/or virtual education (Saba, 2005). This advent of flexible learning is enabling students to learn when they want (frequency, timing, duration), how they want (modes of learning), and what they want (that is learners can define what constitutes learning to them) (Willems, 2005). Thus, the culture of higher education is changing to reflect both societies' consumer-centered culture and the new realities created by distance education.

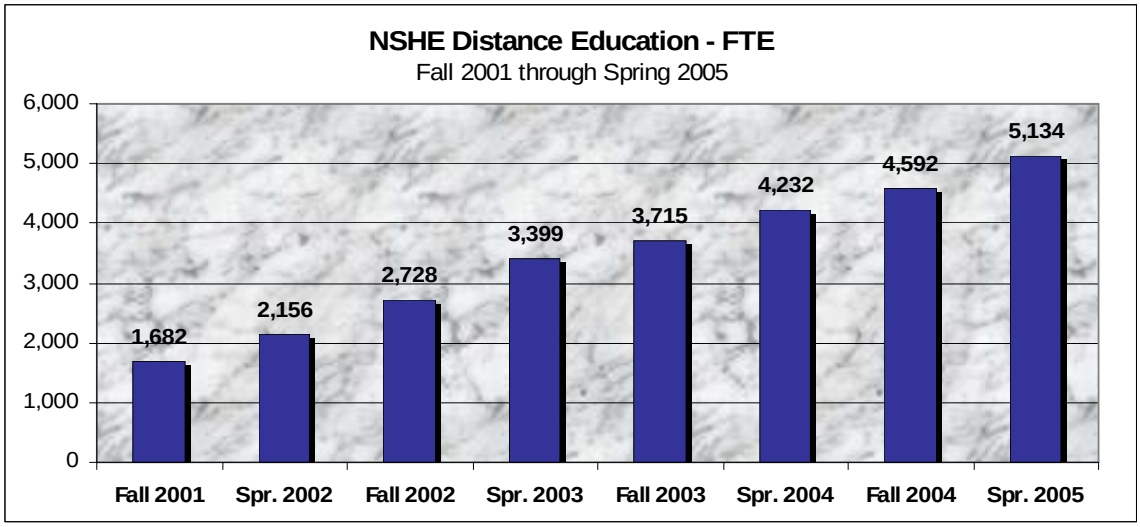
Distance Education and the NSHE

To better understand distance education in the NSHE, the focus of the report will turn to the presentation of performance data through Spring 2005. Data and analysis will be offered on the following areas: enrollment and student demographics. Enrollment in distance education is growing rapidly thereby fulfilling a goal of the Board of Regents in allowing students to participate in some technology-mediated instruction prior to graduation.

Enrollment

In the NSHE, students are measured in one of two ways. The first is on a full-time equivalent (FTE) basis that is calculated separately for undergraduate (15 credits), graduate (12 credits), and doctoral/professional students (9 credits).

Chart 1



System-wide, FTE growth has risen by 209% since Fall 2001 from 1,682 to 5,134 FTE. This increase constitutes an additional 3,452 FTE enrolled in distance education. These data indicate a strong growth trend in distance education for the NSHE. The following table lists the FTE in distance education by institution.

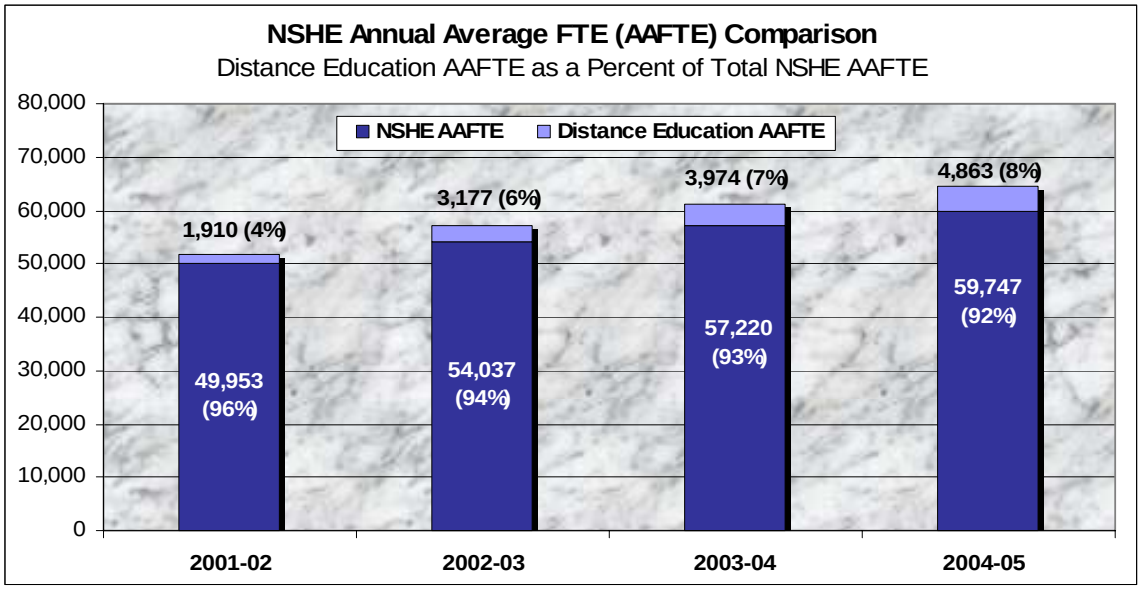
Table 1

Distance Education FTE by Institution
Fall 2001 through Spring 2005

NSHE Institutions	Fall 2001	Spr. 2002	Fall 2002	Spr. 2003	Fall 2003	Spr. 2004	Fall 2004	Spr. 2005
UNLV	212	335	569	591	657	905	1,062	1,141
UNR	NA	NA	NA	228	165	84	65	125
CCSN	853	1,102	1,304	1,621	1,769	1,978	2,068	2,302
GBC	144	152	220	276	224	240	241	282
TMCC	252	373	462	543	659	745	874	943
WNCC	203	193	172	120	150	159	214	257
NSC	NA	NA	NA	21	92	121	68	85
Total	1,682	2,156	2,728	3,399	3,715	4,232	4,592	5,134

Consider also the following chart that displays the distance education annual average FTE (AAFTE) as a percentage of the NSHE AAFTE. AAFTE is calculated by averaging the FTE enrollments of the Spring and Fall semesters.

Chart 2



Distance education enrollments continue to constitute a greater proportion of the system's overall AAFTE, growing from 4% of NSHE AAFTE in 2001-02 to 8% in 2004-05. Below is a table depicting the annual average FTE for distance education as a percent of the total FTE for each NSHE institution.

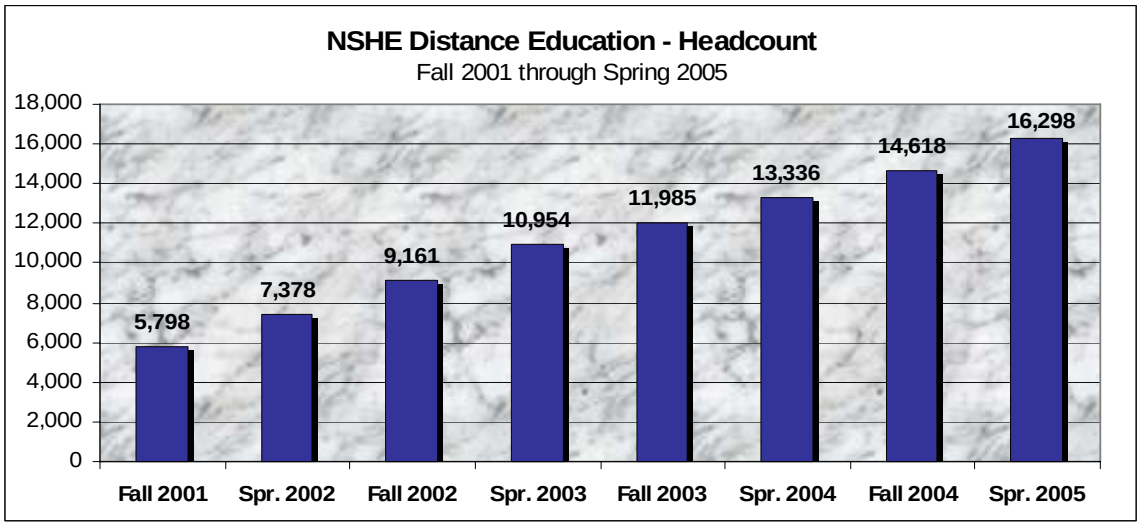
Table 2

Institutional Average Annual FTE Comparison
Distance Education AAFTE as a Percent of Total NSHE AAFTE

NSHE Institutions	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05
UNLV	2%	3%	4%	6%
UNR	NA	2%	1%	1%
CCSN	6%	9%	11%	12%
GBC	12%	20%	16%	19%
TMCC	6%	10%	13%	16%
WNCC	9%	7%	7%	10%
NSC	NA	7%	27%	8%

The accelerated growth of distance education in FTE is also supported through an examination of headcount. The following chart displays the unduplicated headcount of students that have 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.

Chart 3



Since Fall 2001 the number of students enrolled in at least one distance education course has increased by 10,500 students. Since Fall 2001, the unduplicated headcount has risen system-wide by 181%.

From Fall 2003 to Fall 2004, system-wide distance education headcount increased by 21.9%. Nationally, distance education enrollments rose at a rate of 18.2% during the same time period (Allen and Seaman, 2005). The NSHE growth rate compares rather favorably to the rate of growth nationally, outperforming the national trend by a margin of 3.7%.

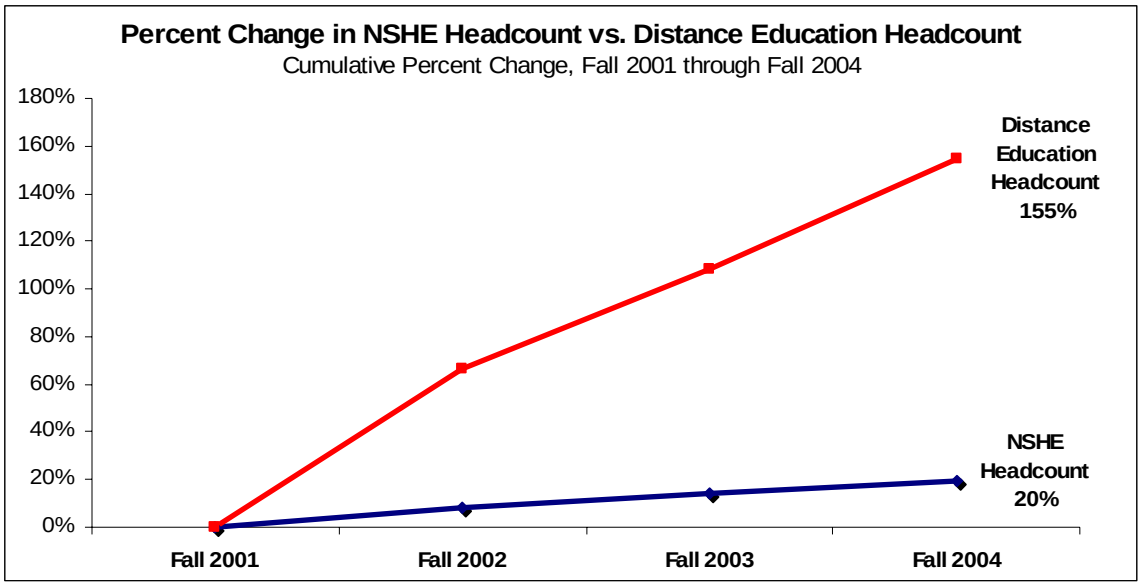
Table 3

Distance Education Headcount by Institution
Fall 2001 through Spring 2005

NSHE Institution	Fall 2001	Spr. 2002	Fall 2002	Spr. 2003	Fall 2003	Spr. 2004	Fall 2004	Spr. 2005
UNLV	894	1,344	2,122	2,121	2,254	3,051	3,560	3,767
UNR	NA	NA	NA	652	718	334	258	506
CCSN	2,766	3,463	4,041	4,833	5,270	5,812	6,234	6,912
GBC	541	587	755	988	753	805	828	884
TMCC	869	1,293	1,595	1,779	2,184	2,412	2,717	3,001
WNCC	728	691	648	480	519	561	721	858
NSC	NA	NA	NA	101	287	361	300	370
Total	5,798	7,378	9,161	10,954	11,985	13,336	14,618	16,298

The following chart displays the enrollment growth in distance education as compared to the growth of the NSHE total headcount.

Chart 4



The rise in distance education headcount outpaces the increase in the overall system-wide headcount, 155% to 20% respectively. As NSHE institutions continue to make distance education options available and as more students participate in distance education, the number of students enrolling in distance education will continue to rise. Recognition of this trend should lead institutions to continue to support the infrastructure for an expansion of distance education technology.

Table 4

Cumulative Percent Change in Distance Education Headcount by Institution
Fall 2001 through Fall 2004

NSHE Institutions	Fall 2001	Fall 2002	Fall 2003	Fall 2004
UNLV	0.0%	137%	152%	298%
UNR	NA	NA	0%	-64%
CCSN	0.0%	46%	91%	125%
GBC	0.0%	40%	39%	53%
TMCC	0.0%	84%	151%	213%
WNCC	0.0%	-11%	-29%	-1%
NSC	0.0%	NA	0%	5%

Table 5

Average Class Size, by Headcount
Fall 2004

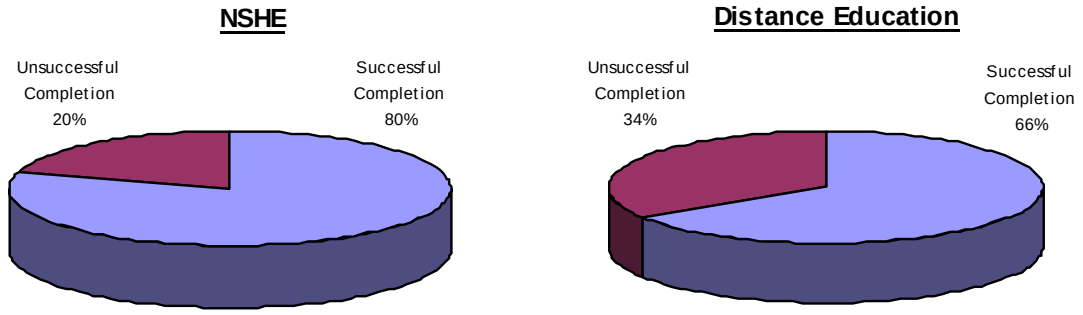
	CCSN	GBC	NSC	TMCC	UNLV	UNR	WNCC	NSHE Total
Ave. Size	23.7	11.3	22.0	24.1	21.2	14.1	14.2	21.0

The average number of students enrolled in a distance education course for the system is 21, indicating a class size that is manageable for faculty.

With small class sizes, it can be expected that academic performance in distance education courses would be high. The following chart compares the successful completion rate of students in the general population compared to students in distance education. Successful completion rate is defined as a student receiving an A, B, C, D, or Pass/Satisfactory grade for the course.

Chart 5

Academic Performance Comparison, Successful Completion Rate: NSHE General Population to Distance Education
Fall 2004



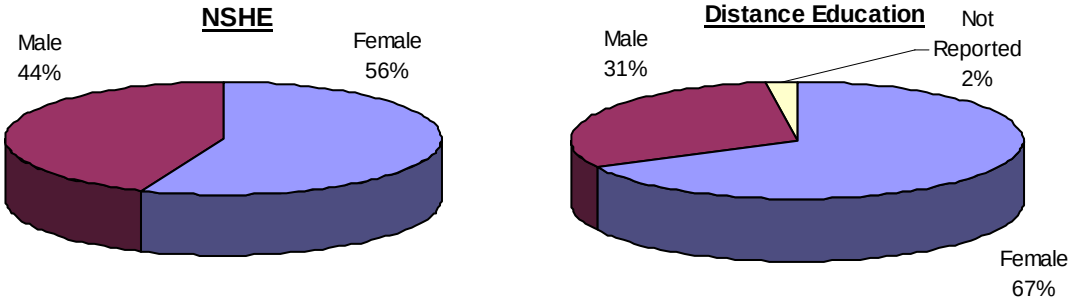
Comparatively, students in the NSHE general population successfully complete their courses at a higher rate (79.7%) than students enrolled in distance education (66.1%). However, students in distance education withdrew from their courses at a much higher rate than the general student population with 27.1% of distance education students receiving a W as compared to 15.2% in the general student population.

Student Demographics

Demographic information provided herein includes gender, ethnicity, age, residency, enrollment status, and academic class standing. These classifications will be compared to the NSHE general population and will include institutional specific data. The purpose of listing the student demographics is to present a profile of a typical distance education student.

Chart 6

Enrollment Comparison: Gender
Fall 2004



Distance education students are overwhelmingly female; constituting almost 7 out of every ten students. When compared to the gender distribution in the NSHE general population, females make up a much higher percentage of enrollments in distance education.

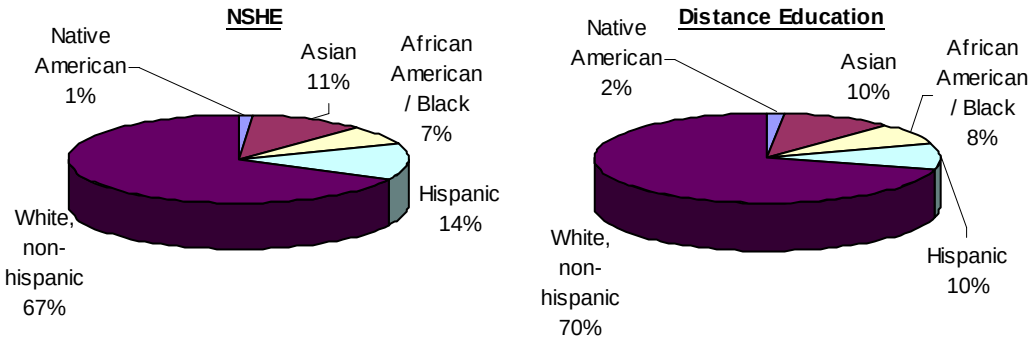
Table 6

Institutional Distance Education Enrollments: Gender
Fall 2004

	CCSN	GBC	NSC	TMCC	UNLV	UNR	WMCC	NSHE
Female	67.8%	75.5%	NR	68.0%	67.3%	77.5%	74.1%	67.3%
Male	32.0%	24.5%	NR	32.0%	32.7%	22.5%	25.9%	30.6%

Chart 7

Enrollment Comparison: Ethnicity
Fall 2004



Every reported minority group participates in distance education at a slightly lower proportion than their representation in the general student body; although it is fairly close. The rates reported above reflect only those students who chose to report their ethnicity and may be higher in actuality.

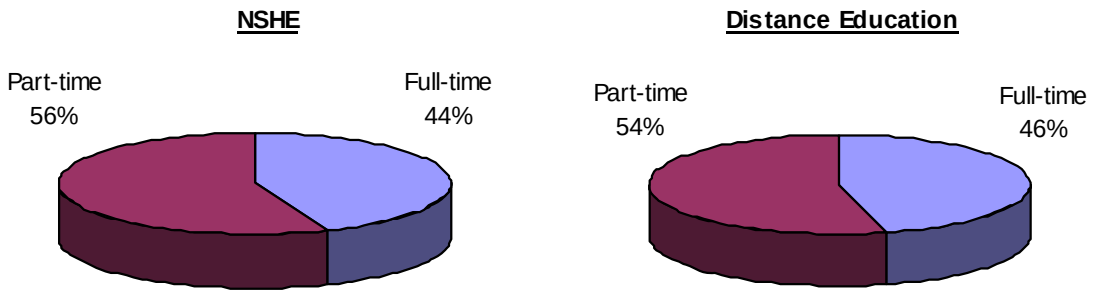
Table 7

Institutional Distance Education Enrollments, by Ethnicity
Fall 2004

	CCSN	GBC	NSC	TMCC	UNLV	UNR	WNCC	NSHE
Native American	1.0%	4.8%	3.2%	2.6%	1.2%	1.7%	4.0%	1.8%
Asian	12.2%	1.0%	9.9%	5.6%	13.7%	4.3%	3.0%	10.0%
African American / Black	10.8%	0.6%	6.3%	2.5%	9.5%	1.7%	1.2%	7.6%
Hispanic	10.8%	10.2%	12.6%	7.5%	9.4%	7.2%	7.0%	9.6%
White, non-hispanic	65.1%	83.4%	68.0%	81.8%	66.2%	85.1%	84.8%	71.0%

Chart 8

Enrollment Comparison: Full-time or Part-time Status
Fall 2004



At NSHE institutions, students who enroll in distance education are fairly evenly split between full-time and part-time status. The above distribution (where 46% of distance education students are enrolled full-time) shows just how mainstream distance education has become. 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.

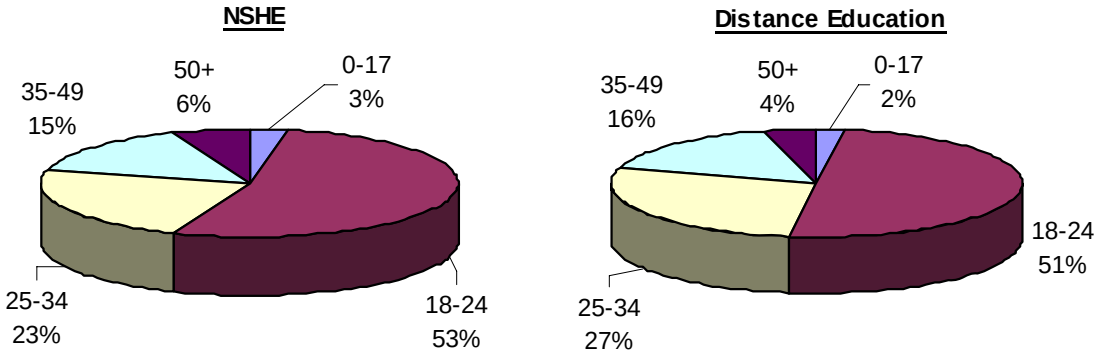
Table 8

Institutional Distance Education Enrollments: Full-time vs. Part-time Status
Fall 2004

	CCSN	GBC	NSC	TMCC	UNLV	UNR	WNCC	NSHE
Full-time	39.5%	40.1%	59.0%	33.3%	70.9%	38.0%	30.9%	46.0%
Part-time	60.5%	59.9%	41.0%	66.7%	29.1%	62.0%	69.1%	54.0%

Chart 9

Enrollment Comparison: Age
Fall 2004



The most represented age group enrolled in distance education is the 18-24 year old group. This age group constituted 51% of the distance education enrollments, followed by the 25-34 year old group at 27%. Combined, these groups make up 78% of the enrollments in distance education. The age distribution of students compares favorably to the age distribution of students throughout the NSHE. The largest difference between the two charts above is in the 25-34 age group. This group participates in distance education at a slightly higher rate with 27% in distance education compared to 24% in the general student population.

It is somewhat surprising to see only 306 (2.1%) students under 18 enrolled in distance education, especially when considering the dual enrollment policy between the NSHE and high schools in Nevada. Distance education courses offered via the internet only cost Nevada high school students $25.00 per course.

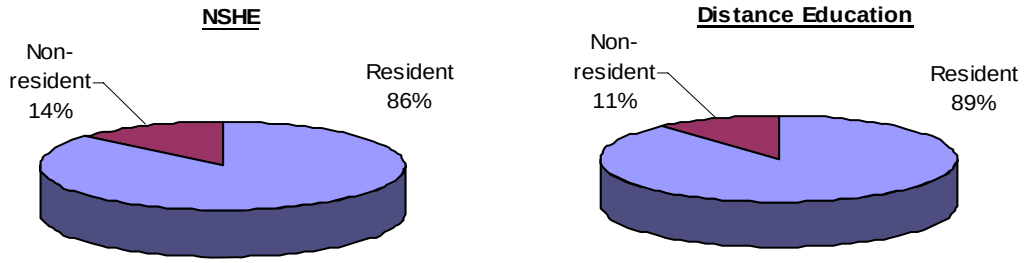
Table 9

Institutional Distance Education Enrollments: Age
Fall 2004

	CCSN	GBC	NSC	TMCC	UNLV	UNR	WNCC	NSHE
0-17	2.9%	5.8%	2.3%	0.7%	0.2%	0.0%	6.4%	2.1%
18-24	46.8%	32.5%	45.7%	51.7%	63.7%	36.4%	32.9%	50.1%
25-34	29.3%	23.8%	26.3%	27.5%	24.6%	29.1%	28.7%	27.4%
35-49	17.1%	27.7%	21.7%	16.5%	9.0%	23.6%	25.7%	16.3%
50+	3.9%	10.3%	4.0%	3.6%	2.5%	10.9%	6.4%	4.1%

Chart 10

Enrollment Comparison: Residency Status
Fall 2004



A slightly higher percentage of Nevada residents enroll in distance education than residents in the general student population, 89% to 86% respectively. With 89% of the total enrollments in distance education courses made up of Nevada residents, a couple of issues arise. One is the untapped market of students that could be reached that are out-of-state. As distance education becomes normalized, there are opportunities to reach out-of-state students for attendance at NSHE institution via distance education. 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. The NSHE must prepare for this developing market or risk the possibility of losing the 89% monopoly we currently enjoy.

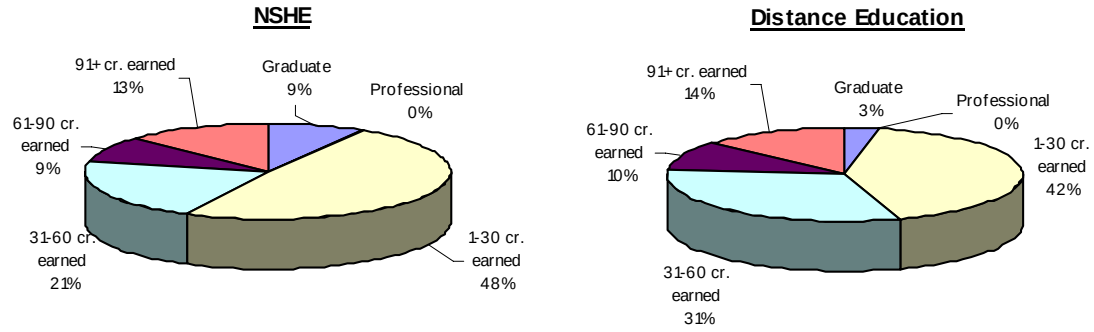
Table 10

Institutional Distance Education Enrollments: Residency
Fall 2004

	CCSN	GBC	NSC	TMCC	UNLV	UNR	WNCC	NSHE
Resident	92.6%	99.8%	93.3%	93.6%	74.2%	86.4%	95.3%	88.7%
Non-resident	7.4%	0.2%	6.7%	6.4%	25.8%	13.6%	4.7%	11.3%

Chart 11

Enrollment Comparison: Class Standing
Fall 2004



Most of distance education occurs within the first two years of college attendance. Throughout the system, undergraduates with less than 60 credits earned accounted for 73% of students enrolled in distance education.

Table 11

Institutional Distance Education Enrollments: Class Standing
Fall 2004

	CCSN	GBC	NSC	TMCC	UNLV	UNR	WNCC	NSHE
Graduate	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	8.9%	47.7%	0.0%	3.0%
Professional	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1.6%	0.0%	0.0%
1-30 cr. earned	49.7%	47.0%	33.7%	67.3%	4.3%	5.1%	73.1%	41.9%
31-60 cr. earned	50.3%	20.2%	17.3%	20.6%	14.2%	5.9%	20.5%	31.5%
61-90 cr. earned	0.0%	13.6%	22.0%	12.1%	24.7%	12.1%	6.4%	9.9%
91+ cr. earned	0.0%	19.2%	27.0%	0.0%	48.0%	27.7%	0.0%	13.7%

From the above data a profile of a typical distance education student can be created. A representative distance education student in the NSHE will be: 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.

Meeting a New Reality

The remainder of this report will discuss the prevailing issues facing distance education. These issues are existent both nationally and in Nevada. Distance education is more than a delivery method of education. It is a social and psychological phenomenon measured by the independence that the learner requires in the teaching and learning process and the structure provided by the instructor and/or the institution. Hiltz and Turoff (2005) highlight two very important variables in distance education that must be kept at the forefront of any related discussion: autonomy and structure. Autonomy is the requisite control that the learner exerts in defining their objectives, in selecting learning strategies, and identifying learning materials. Structure is defined as the required control that an instructor or an instructional institution brings to the educational system. As autonomy and structure are balanced, the relative success of distance education will be advanced. The NSHE and its instructors will find that as distance education becomes more widely utilized, students will expect instructors and institutions to take into account their autonomy. If distance education does nothing else, it offers students choices in making more avenues available to participate in some form of higher education.

Another issue that distance education is placing at the doorstep of institutions is affording students a more flexible class schedule. Despite the growth of distance education in all sectors of public and private education and training, students are presented only with lock-step educational services. The irony is that such uniform services are increasingly offered through powerful information technologies that have the potential to offer individualized responses. An example of this is the customary 16 week semester. In spite of the pacing required by individual learners, most courses move at a predetermined

speed that reflects the uniformity that perhaps was desired in the industrial era but will become obsolete through distance education. Institutions who offer students an individualized, flexible schedule will achieve a competitive advantage in the recruitment of today's tech savvy student. Customized education through the flexibility provided by distance education is most suitable to the needs of a post-modern student (Saba, 2005). The sooner NSHE institutions prepare and embrace this trend, NSHE will be better suited to continue its mission of delivering quality education to Nevada's students.

Recommendations

In order to meet the demands of the incoming post-modern student, there are several recommendations that if taken will help the NSHE meet the needs of the new reality created by distance education. The following recommendations are offered in no particular order:

- Infrastructure
  - 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.

  - 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.

- Instructional Designers
  - 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.

- State-wide coordinated effort
  - 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.

- Review and update of Board of Regent policies
  - There have been many advances in distance education since the last time the Board policies relating to distance education were examined (1999).

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

- Support staff
  - 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.

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

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

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

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Appendix

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

Distance Learning

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

1. The quality of distance learning courses should be equal to or exceed that of on-campus courses. This includes the application of institutional procedures in admission of students to programs or courses, selection and evaluation of instructors, and monitoring of the assessment of student performance. (B/R 11/98)

2. Faculty members assigned to distance learning courses may be provided with incentives, as deemed appropriate by the institution. (B/R 12/02)

3. The institution will be expected to provide appropriate instructional support to insure quality. (B/R 9/93)

4. Each distance learning 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 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. (B/R 11/98)

5. Each student enrolled in a distance learning course shall have reasonable access to all academic support services that the institution provides for students enrolled in on-campus resident credit programs, including such services as academic advising, counseling, library and other learning resources, tutoring services, and financial aid. (B/R 11/98)

6. Distance learning materials produced outside or within the institution must be evaluated and selected in accordance with standard instructional procedures for course development and instruction. (B/R 11/98)

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.

Community College of Southern Nevada: Clark, Lincoln, Nye and Esmeralda counties.

Great Basin College: Elko, Eureka, Humboldt, Lander and White Pine counties.

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

Western Nevada Community 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. (B/R 12/02)

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. (B/R 12/02)

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. (B/R 12/02)

8. The institution offering a distance learning 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. (B/R 11/98)

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 learning courses will be prepared 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 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. (B/R 12/02)

For courses developed after the annual program planning process has been completed, information about these courses will be shared with other institutions as soon as possible.

11. Each campus will have a policy or procedure for the approval of distance learning courses and programs. No institution can offer a degree program in distance learning format that has not been previously approved by the Board of Regents for traditional delivery. (B/R 11/98)

12. When institutional funds are used to purchase interactive video equipment, that equipment is owned by the institution. Institutions accepting ownership of interactive video equipment also accept responsibility for maintenance and service of that equipment. (B/R 11/98)

When interactive video 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.

Oversight of scheduling and switching of interactive video is the responsibility of System Computing Services *(SCS)* . SCS will work with institutional representatives, particularly in regards to installation, connectivity, and transmission. (B/R 11/98)