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*Report on the  
Establishment of  
Academic Programming  
Offered Through  
Distance Education*

October 2009





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## DESCRIPTIVE INFORMATION

- Person with institutional responsibility for academic quality of distance education programming and institutional contact:

Lela Morgan, Vice President for Academic Affairs

- Access information, including URL(s), passwords, and information about CCRI's distance learning activities, including online services for students and faculty supported by brief descriptions:

To review examples of CCRI's distance education courses, follow these steps:

- Click on the link: <http://www.ccri.edu/>
- Click on the tab on the left side of the page labeled "Faculty & Staff"
- Under Links/Resources, scroll down and click on WebCT Login
- Click on "Log in to my WebCT"
- Enter in lowercase letters the word xxxxx for WebCT ID
- Enter in lowercase letters the word xxxxx for Password

**Note:** This site also contains training courses for creating courses in this format.

- Description of technical infrastructure designed to support CCRI's distance education activities  
The infrastructure to support the distance learning commitment at the Community College of Rhode Island consists of a core on each campus of Cisco 6509 switches with a maximum bandwidth of 720 Gbps. Each network closet is fed by at least 1 Gbps fiber uplink (and in most cases 2 Gbps fiber uplinks) depending on the density of the closet. Each desktop has a 100 Mbps switched copper Ethernet connection. Our connection to three campuses (Knight, Flanagan and Liston) is a 1Gbps fiber connection on a ring (offered through the OSHEAN consortium) for high availability and redundancy. The Newport campus is currently on a 20Mbps point-to-point connection from Cox to Warwick campus; imminent plans are in development for extending the 1Gbps fiber network to that location as well.
- Description of the institution's verification procedures (the procedures through which the institution will ensure that the student who registers in a distance education program is the same student who participates in and completes the program and receives the grade).

CCRI issues a unique username and password to all students to access the college's computer systems for registering for classes, reviewing their grades and other uses. This same username and password is used for students to access the learning management system (WebCT/Blackboard) for distance education classes. Students must use this username and password to access the course Web site on the learning management system each time the student signs into the course.

CCRI's policies related to distance learning include directing faculty to adhere to stated guidelines in terms of assessment methods used for any particular course. These guidelines include the following:

If any one test administered during the online course accounts for a substantial part of the student's final grade for the course (20 percent or more), students should be directed to either a faculty member's campus office or to the campus testing center to complete the exam. Campus testing centers require that students present their photo ID card before entering the center. Proctors retain a student's ID until the exam has been completed.

If faculty are relying on on-line testing in their course, it is recommended that no more than 50 percent of the final course grade be based upon online tests and that multiple tests worth 10 percent or 15 percent of the final grade be used. The remaining 50 percent of the final course grade should be determined by other assessment methods such as proctored final examination,

multiple research and writing assignments, graded discussion board postings and group or individual projects related to course content.

Faculty using online testing are guided to use various methods to ensure the integrity of online testing. These methods include delaying the release of a test grade until the availability period expires; setting up the test to prohibit copying and printing; placing both questions and answers in multiple choice tests in random order each time the test is viewed; limiting the time the student has to take the test to minimize the risk of the student using outside resources; and forcing completion of the test in one sitting within the time allowed.

**Note:** CCRI's policies on student verification procedures were guided by the intent and concerns expressed in the following document:

Notes From the Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2008

U.S. Congress Conference Report on this act at page 139 reads:

*“The Senate amendment and the House bill require accrediting agencies to require that institutions of higher education offering distance education programs have a process by which the institution of higher education establishes that a student registered for a distance education course is the same student that participates in, completes, and receives credit for the course. The Conferees adopt the provision as proposed by both the Senate and the House. The Conferees expect institutions that offer distance education to have security mechanisms in place, such as identification numbers or other pass code information required to be used each time the student participates in class time or coursework on-line. As new identification technologies are developed and become more sophisticated, less expensive and more mainstream, the Conferees anticipate that accrediting agencies or associations and institutions will consider their use in the future. The Conferees do not intend that institutions use or rely on any technology that interferes with the privacy of the student and expect that students’ privacy will be protected with whichever method the institutions choose to utilize.”*

- Listing of consortial partners or contractual relationships that CCRI utilizes to support its distance education activities:

CCRI designs and maintains its own distance education activities.

## NARRATIVE

### Institutional Overview

From its modest beginning as Rhode Island Junior College with 325 students in 1964, to its present enrollment of more than 17,000 students, the Community College of Rhode Island (CCRI) has grown to meet the goals of its founders. Since being established by the Rhode Island General Assembly, the college's charge has been to provide academic transfer programs, career oriented training and student support services of the highest caliber.

Living up to its mission, the Community College of Rhode Island – known locally as CCRI – offers open access to programs in academic and vocational-technical areas as well as a full complement of programs and services for full- and part-time students, for recent high school graduates and for older, adult learners. The student body at the Community College of Rhode Island enjoys considerable diversity in ages, cultures and experiences. Sixty-two percent are women, 63 percent are part-time, 22 percent are from an ethnic minority group and 38 percent are 25 years of age or older.

On their own and often through the coordinated Joint Admissions Agreement Program, 70 percent of graduating students transfer to four-year colleges and universities. Others complete career-oriented programs which can lead to immediate employment in technical fields. In fact, the Community College of Rhode Island is the largest provider of health care workers in the state. Our high academic standards prepare CCRI graduates for transfer or for entering the work force, thus contributing to Rhode Island's economy.

Community College of Rhode Island grants the Associate in Arts (A.A.), the Associate in Science (A.S.), the Associate in Applied Science (A.A.S.), the Associate in Applied Science in Technical Studies (A.A.S.-T.S.) and the Associate in Fine Arts (A.F.A.) degrees. Several one-year certificates are also awarded.

CCRI opens its facilities for public use, sponsors programs on issues of public concern, and offers workshops and seminars for small businesses, for government agencies and for individuals seeking to improve their skills or enhance their lives.

In every sense, CCRI—as a community resource and the state’s only two-year, degree-granting institution – strives to meet the educational needs of the people of this state by adhering to its mission of “building on our rich tradition of excellence in teaching and our dedication to all students with the ability and motivation to succeed.” In an effort to serve residents from across the state, CCRI has established four main campuses – Knight Campus in Warwick, Flanagan Campus in Lincoln, Liston Campus in Providence and the Newport County Campus in Newport – and two additional satellite campuses (one in Westerly and the other in downtown Providence).

### **Student Characteristics**

Several patterns of student characteristics are particularly germane to CCRI's decision to pursue electronically offered degree and certificate programs. Based on recent in-house institutional research reports, approximately 80 percent of CCRI students work either full- or part-time while pursuing their education. Work schedules often interfere with the times that students have available to take classes, thus making asynchronous formats more attractive.

Although CCRI has well-established, multiple campus sites, two of its four main campuses – Warwick and Providence –are located on the eastern shore of Rhode Island within 10 miles of each other. When one reviews the top 10 cities in which CCRI students reside, more than 40 percent of students reside in or near the Warwick and Providence campuses. The remaining 55 to 58 percent of the students need to drive significant distances (over 30 miles) to reach a campus. Because of Rhode Island's unique geographic features of large rural areas coupled with cities and towns located on or near Narraganset Bay, commuting times are often increased because of the lack of major highways and/or bridge crossings involved in reaching one of the major campuses. Not having to experience the time and costs associated with challenging commutes also makes electronically-supported programs more attractive.

Another advantage of electronically supported degree programs is that they are less dependent on “geographical” proximity when determining the pipeline of students to be served. While the smaller, more remote campuses can include course offerings that are common to most programs – English Composition and math courses – specialty courses often require that students travel to either the Warwick or Lincoln campus. Courses offered in an electronic format can draw interest from across the state.

Student response to the convenience of online learning formats is clearly reflected in the increasing enrollment in distance education classes. The head count of students enrolled in distance education courses in Fall 2009 is up 43 percent from Fall 2008. The full-time equivalent number enrolled in distance education courses for Fall 2009 reflects an increase of 50 percent from Fall 2008.

### **Mission**

CCRI clearly has embraced a mission statement that is responsive to the needs of the communities it serves. Adopted in 2006, the mission statement reads as follows:

#### ***Mission Statement***

*The Community College of Rhode Island is the state’s only public comprehensive associate degree-granting institution. We provide affordable open access to higher education at locations throughout the state. Our primary mission is to offer recent high school graduates and returning adults the opportunity to acquire the knowledge and skills necessary for intellectual, professional and personal growth through an array of academic, career and lifelong learning programs. We meet the wide-ranging*

*educational needs of our diverse student population, building on our rich tradition of excellence in teaching and our dedication to all students with the ability and motivation to succeed. We set high academic standards necessary for transfer and career success, champion diversity, respond to community needs, and contribute to our state's economic development and the region's workforce.*

CCRI, with its multiple campuses, has invested in and relied on technology for many years in order to support faculty, staff and students on its multiple campuses. It began offering distance education courses more than 10 years ago. It has invested heavily in technology and has steadily taken steps to increase its ability to carry out its mission by making Web-based courses available to its constituents.

The college formed a Distance Learning Advisory Committee in 2004 and it has crafted the following mission statement to guide its work:

*The mission of the Distance Learning Program at the Community College of Rhode Island is to extend and maximize the college's mission of providing affordable open access to higher education by providing the college's diverse student population with more flexible learning venues. The Distance Learning Program offers students more flexibility in planning a course load, permitting them the option of pursuing an education regardless of time or location. The Distance Learning Program provides educational opportunities to persons with job responsibilities, child-care issues, or transportation issues that interfere with their ability to pursue their education through traditional on-campus classes.*

### **Planning and Evaluation**

CCRI has recently completed a strategic planning process that engaged broad campus participation. CCRI's strategic plan is the culmination of a nearly 18-month process by hundreds of dedicated and hardworking individuals to establish the priorities and goals for the state's only community college and the largest community college in New England. On May 11, 2009, the Rhode Island Board of Governors for Higher Education approved the 2009-2012 Strategic Plan for the college.

Faculty and staff gave unparalleled attention to creating a realistic and effective plan that focuses on the college's future success. The plan establishes the framework for the allocation of financial and human resources in a difficult economic environment that will continue throughout the life of this plan. The objectives of the plan focus on student success and fulfilling our primary mission "to offer recent high school graduates and returning adults the opportunity to acquire the knowledge and skills necessary for intellectual, professional and personal growth through an array of academic, career and lifelong learning programs."

To advance our mission to better serve our internal and external stakeholders, four key questions were raised and committees were asked to evaluate and respond to each of the questions:

- What students will we teach?
- What will our students learn?
- What resources will we need?
- How will we measure success?

Within the framework of these questions, the committees formulated a plan detailing action items, performance indicators and responsibilities. The strategic goals that were created from the initial charges include the following:

- Position the college for the fiscal, political and demographic shifts of the 21st century
- Strengthen the culture of academic excellence and inquiry to prepare students for transfer, employment and career advancement
- Maximize organizational efficiency and resource utilization
- Develop measurement standards and performance indicators to assess the institutional effectiveness of the college.

The reader can review the college's strategic plan in its entirety by clicking on the following link:

<http://www.ccri.edu/stratplan/pdfs/stratplan09.pdf>

The reader will note that Action Item 2.4 – found in the section addressing “Who Shall We Teach?” – addresses planning for increasing the use of technology to improve instruction, including offering degree programs online:

***Action Item 2.4: Expand the use of technology to support learning, including distance learning, provide degree options and deliver online support services.***

*Actions:*

- *Determine appropriate programs or degrees to be offered completely online*
- *Identify strategies for providing support services for distance learners*
- *Create a marketing plan targeting distance learners*
- *Provide support for revising curriculum design in the online environment*
- *Utilize existing technology within classroom settings to address multiple learning styles*

*Progress Indicators:*

- *Increased number of distance learning courses offered each academic year*
- *Increased number of fully online degree programs*
- *Increased number of “technology-assisted” courses offered each year*
- *Expanded distance learning faculty support system within IT Department.*

As part of the college’s thoughtful planning to pursue electronically-based degree programs, it has also given careful consideration to designing and supporting quality programs, including on-going assessment. The Distance Learning Advisory Committee, co-chaired by two tenured faculty members and supported by 25 members, spent considerable time in developing a set of policies to govern distance learning. Known as the Distance Learning Policy, it can be found at the following link:

<http://www.ccri.edu/distancessupport/pdfs/DistanceLearningPolicy2008.pdf>

This document is discussed in more detail in the section on Academic Programs. However, it is important to note here that the Distance Learning Advisory Committee is charged by the Vice President for Academic Affairs “to examine and recommend institutional policies and practices for developing, planning, evaluating, and implementing distance/distributed offerings with a focus on quality and connection to the mission of the institution.” The section on Academic Programs also contains a description of the process utilized by the college in planning to offer its first online program.

The committee has created a student course evaluation form that embodies the same evaluative strands as the classroom-based form with obvious modifications to acknowledge the electronic format of the course. A copy of this form can be viewed at the following link:

<http://www.ccri.edu/distancessupport/>

## **Organization and Governance**

The college utilizes a governance system that is composed of six separate councils, all of which report to a College Coordinating Council. The governance system acknowledges that it is advisory to the president of the college and the president’s executive team. The Distance Learning Advisory Committee is one of the committees that constitute the Academic Council. The Academic Council is responsible for developing, reviewing and evaluating academic policies for the college. The placement of the Advisory Committee within the Academic Council is another indicator of the college’s understanding that while the technology aspects of this form of learning are important and must be addressed, the primary emphasis of this initiative is instructional quality. There is also an umbrella Technology Council that is responsible for developing, reviewing and evaluating a college technology strategic plan and technology policies in accordance with the vision, mission and strategic plan of the college.

The Distance Learning Advisory Committee, as noted earlier, examines and recommends institutional policies and practices related to all distance education offerings. Once the committee approves a policy, it forwards its recommendation to both the department chairs and the Academic Council with a copy to the Vice President for Academic Affairs. The Academic Council reviews the recommended policy with the members of its council as a way of ensuring that all aspects of the college

are moving in the same direction. The reviewed policy is then forwarded to the College Coordinating Council. This body reviews the Academic Council's recommendations in tandem with other councils' input and then forwards them to the President's Council for final approval.

In rare instances, policies may have to be approved by the Rhode Island Board of Governors for Higher Education. For example, after several years work, CCRI drafted an Intellectual Property Policy to determine the ownership of the material created in the on-line learning format. Once the policy was approved within the CCRI governance process, it had to be reviewed and approved by the Board of Governors since it had contractual implications. The Board of Governors approved the policy on March 24, 2008.

### **The Academic Program**

CCRI has invested nearly 10 years of time in planning for offering its first degree program with more than 50 percent of the courses available through electronically-mediated formats. As noted earlier, the geographical distances between CCRI's multiple campuses provided an excellent incentive for CCRI to invest heavily in technology. The faculty, staff and students came to rely on technology early on in the college's history as a means for communicating and conducting business from many different locations. As a result of this "necessity" for overcoming the challenges of distance and multiple campus sites, CCRI has established a very solid presence – including hardware, software and the skilled staff to support both – in today's world that is dependent on technology. The following paragraphs submitted as part of the institution's Fifth-Year Interim Report to NEASC describe the college's strength in technology.

*"Significant investments in a stronger and more robust infrastructure - wireless technology on every campus and smart technology in the classrooms - allows the college to enjoy a level of stability and reliability not possible before.*

*At CCRI, increasing our capabilities over the next three to five years include: introducing dynamic data for analysis and decision making; continuing infrastructure improvements guaranteeing service reliability; expanding business continuity and disaster recovery planning; ensuring compliance with federal/state laws and regulations; increasing our ability to deliver targeted services based on individual roles; and, introducing convenient streaming of audio/video productions to the classrooms to name just a few of the improvements we hope to introduce.*

*Information technology at CCRI sets the tone and is geared toward excellence. Its commitment to delivering cutting edge style information, connectivity and resources to students, faculty and staff is expressed in classrooms, labs and wireless hotspots throughout the four campuses. Providing the best services, in a reliable and dependable manner, enables the Community College of Rhode Island to elevate possibilities both for our internal and external constituencies. Through teamwork, customer service, innovation and creativity, CCRI delivers the best in breed products and services encouraging development and investment in technology for the future."*

CCRI's investment in technology has also been noted by external reviewers. The December, 2001, *Currents – Your Community College News Connection* noted that CCRI was "ranked seventh in the United States in the latest edition of the Yahoo! Internet Life magazine's rankings of the most wired two-year institutions." Currently, more than 85 percent of CCRI's classrooms across all of its campuses are electronically equipped to support Web-enhanced instruction.

Possessing a solid foundation in the technical areas of technology has allowed the faculty to confidently pursue designing instruction that utilizes electronically-based media. "Distance education" in the broadest sense of the term is not new to CCRI. The college has utilized telecourses as a means for providing instruction to its multiple campuses. For a better sense of the depth and breadth of CCRI's technology capabilities and its use of multiple media formats to support instruction, the reader is invited to view the range of support for faculty within the electronic version of the Faculty Handbook provided at the following link:

<http://www.ccri.edu/acadaffairs/docs/facultyhandbookfinal.pdf>

The Distance Learning Advisory Committee has established a set of policies regarding distance learning. A copy of this document can be found at:

<http://www.ccri.edu/distancefaculty/pdfs/DistanceLearningPolicy2008.pdf>

The stated policies help guide faculty in creating both the level of participation in Web-enhanced instruction and the quality of participation that the institution is seeking. To assist faculty in learning to experience the advantages of this medium, the college has created clear definitions that reflect a graduated continuum of utilization of technology to support instruction. These definitions are available through the following link:

<http://www.ccri.edu/distancefaculty/pdfs/DistanceLearningPolicy2008.pdf>

As a way of gradually introducing faculty to using technology to support instruction, the Distance Learning Advisory Committee advises faculty to begin by using “Web-enhanced” courses. Workshops and mentors are provided on a regular basis to assist faculty in learning how to use a course management system for completing surveys, assignments and/or testing materials. Faculty also learn how to use the technology to augment their existing instructional design, including using more visual and/or experiential material to reach a wider more diverse set of students’ learning styles.

From this introductory model, faculty are encouraged and supported through training and consultations to offer hybrid courses in which less than 80 percent of the course is delivered online. In this model, students and instructors have the “fall back” position of knowing that they can return to the traditional classroom setting to address existing gaps in the learning process. Hybrid courses offer both faculty and students a good safety net for trying out something new while controlling for risks and the frustrations that often accompany new learning.

A recently released study – accessible through the link listed below – comparing student success in traditional classroom settings, in hybrid courses and in online course formats favors the hybrid learning format. While the size of the sample is too small to draw definite conclusions, studies such as this may help educators gain new insights into how to increase student success. One very interesting finding from this study is that students performed better in hybrid settings than they did in either traditional classroom settings or in online course formats.

<http://www.insidehighered.com/news/2009/09/22/hybrids>

The college offers multiple workshops and training sessions to assist faculty in learning how to design and oversee courses that begin to rely more on Web-enhanced instruction. For a sampling of these workshops, visit the following link:

<http://www.ccri.edu/prodev/Categoriesworkshops09.shtml>

Hybrid courses are excellent introductions for both students and faculty into the world of “virtual learning.” Currently, 98 percent of the online learning courses are taught by full-time faculty members. Most of these faculty members evolved to teaching in the online format after offering a series of hybrid courses. The Distance Learning Advisory Committee actually mandates that faculty not teach an online course until they have experience with using a course management system in one of their classroom-based courses.

This careful and intentional migration of faculty into relying on technology to create a virtual classroom is a reflection of CCRI’s understanding of the need to adequately prepare and support faculty in this endeavor. Since distance education at CCRI is a faculty-led endeavor, these thoughtful benchmarks have been established based on faculty’s experience of what is needed to be successful in this new media.

CCRI’s course publications clearly articulate the meaning and expectation of students in these different learning venues. College materials also inform students of the technology requirements and computer programs they will need to utilize on a regular basis to complete the online courses.

CCRI has made a major programmatic decision as it prepares to offer more than 50 percent of the courses within certain programs in a distance education format. CCRI’s targeted audience for programs offered through distance education consists of students who live within commuting distance of one of CCRI’s main campuses. The rationale behind this decision is that CCRI intends to offer “blended” degree programs which consist of more than 50 percent but less than 100 percent of required courses available

via distance education. The faculty believe that there are many valid reasons for having students return to campus during the process of degree completion.

Each of CCRI's programs include stated student learning outcomes and these outcomes will remain the same regardless of the medium in which the student pursues the program. However, CCRI values the role of "community" in a student's learning and, as a result, the faculty believe that it is important to have students in the program gather in person periodically to help foster a community of learners.

Each of CCRI's programs include some goals that may be better addressed by students being physically present for the relaying and/or demonstrating of new material. CCRI's new General Education core curriculum stresses "effective communication" and "social interaction." While both of these components may be addressed via electronic interactions, it is also important for students and faculty to have the opportunity to work on these core components in face-to-face situations.

In addition, even though CCRI has taken specific steps to control for academic integrity in assessment situations, the college has identified the need to periodically have students come to one of the college's on-site testing centers to complete course assessment materials.

In all of its publications, CCRI will make clear the following important information for prospective students interested in participating in a "blended" program of study:

- Clearly identifying a program as a "blended" program, including defining the term
- Clearly identifying which of CCRI's campuses will serve as the host site for face-to-face meetings (Note: It is possible that CCRI may decide to hold face-to-face meetings on more than one campus; in this situation, the published information would specify this expectation up front.)
- Clearly identifying the anticipated sequence of course offerings, including semester that the course will be offered
- Clearly identifying which courses will be online courses, which courses will be hybrid courses, and which courses will be traditional face-to-face classroom courses, with a scheduled time for class meetings.

Finally, in an effort to evaluate the effectiveness of its online learning courses, the college has utilized the services of its Institutional Research office to review the similarities and/or differences in student outcomes based on the learning format. As CCRI moves to offering select degrees online, it will continue to monitor student learning outcomes. In addition, particularly when there is a control group available (classroom-based option available for the same program), the college will do complete comparison studies between the two formats to help determine the comparable quality of the different learning formats.

The college has also relied on the Institutional Research office to identify existing programs that meet the criteria for offering a program in an online format. Some of the criteria that factor into adding an online option include: future career opportunities, student interest and demand, faculty interest in working in an online format, supporting the college's mission, etc. Currently, the college has identified the Business Administration program as the first program that it will offer in an online format. All of the student learning outcomes for this program as well as the required courses in the major are posted on the Web:

<http://www.ccri.edu/businessadmin/programoutcomes1.shtml>

<http://www.ccri.edu/businessadmin/courseoutcomes.shtml>

Currently near 40 percent of the required courses in the General Business degree program are available in an online format. The college anticipates that it will have more than 50 percent of the courses available for online enrollment by September 2010. However, as stated earlier in this section, the college plans to require that students complete some of their courses in traditional classroom settings. These requirements will be clearly stated in all college publications.

In summary, many characteristics speak to CCRI's commitment to maintaining the same level of educational quality in electronically-supported instruction as it maintains in its traditional offerings.

CCRI's long-standing history of experience with distance education, its thoughtful creation of a Distance Learning Advisory Committee that is faculty-led and supported, and its deliberate and careful introduction and monitoring of faculty's initiation into online offerings are all signs of CCRI's commitment to quality. The next section explores, in more detail, some of the steps that CCRI has in place to support faculty in this process.

## **Faculty**

CCRI recognizes the need for professional development support for faculty interested in teaching distance learning courses. In order to ensure that faculty have access to appropriate technical and pedagogical support, the college created the Distance Learning Advisory Committee in 2004, as noted earlier. The committee is co-chaired by two tenured CCRI faculty, Daniel J. Donovan, professor of Legal Studies and JoAnn Warren, professor of Business Administration. The committee has 25 members, 80 percent of whom are faculty members from 12 academic disciplines. The remaining members represent the key support areas of Information Technology, Library and Enrollment Services.

As part of making sure that faculty are adequately prepared to teach online courses, the Advisory Committee which reports directly to the Vice President for Academic Affairs has articulated clear guidelines and expectations regarding faculty preparation. Key portions of the college's *Distance Learning Policies* are cited here in quotes to verify these expectations.

\*

### Web-Enhanced Instructional Experience

As noted earlier, CCRI has taken a phasing-in approach for building faculty members' capacity and competence to offer entire courses in a Web-based format. "A faculty member must have at least one semester's experience with a Web-based learning management system, preferably Blackboard Learning System (formerly known as WebCT), prior to offering a class online. Familiarity with a course management tool is necessary to manage student interaction, assessment and assistance successfully. The licensed and supported product at CCRI is Blackboard Learning System. The majority of CCRI fully online courses are currently using this software therefore it is the preferred tool in order to maximize consistency and minimize distance students' learning curves and confusion. The IT Staff provides training and support for Blackboard Learning System..."

Note that the college has taken steps to ensure that faculty who are interested in teaching online courses have the prerequisite experience for the course to be successful. "Department chairs must be aware of the technological needs for offering a distance course and should verify the faculty member's experience before assigning any distance learning classes. Prospective online faculty should contact Information Technology support staff to set up course shells and familiarize themselves with the course management tools utilizing resources provided on the Department of Information Technology Web site."

### Distance Pedagogy Preparation

Faculty teaching at a distance must develop familiarity with distance pedagogy prior to teaching their first course in this modality. Faculty interested in transitioning to distance teaching must complete the short course on online pedagogy developed by the Distance Learning Advisory Committee prior to teaching their first distance course. This short course is offered in a fully online format at specified times during the year. The course provides an overview of what constitutes "quality" online courses, including the unique demands on faculty in regard to instructional design, the creation of a virtual community and assessment. All of the basic components of a quality online course are incorporated into this course in order to emulate best practices. In addition, exemplary templates that utilize principles of good practice are available to pave the way for faculty to easily apply online pedagogy.

### Two-Semester Commitment

Since the college invests fiscal and human resources in preparing faculty to teach in the online format, it asks in return that faculty make a two-semester commitment to the project. Part of this stated

expectation is to also allow faculty to gain a comfort level with the experience and to give themselves adequate time to get used to the experience. “Faculty agreeing to teach a distance course will commit to doing so for a minimum of two semesters. If a faculty member decides that this environment is not comfortable for him or her, the department chair will have the extra semester to find and train a replacement while allowing the program some continuity. Similarly, it is preferable for a department to allow a faculty member who has worked on developing a fully online course to teach that course for two or three semesters in order to gain experience, refine the course and, perhaps, make it part of the college’s regular offerings.”

Finally, the college recognizes the amount of time invested by faculty in learning how to use this new pedagogy. As a result, the department chairs who assign faculty workload are asked to allow faculty to continue to teach courses that they have developed for the online format. “Although department chairs contractually can assign anyone he or she thinks is appropriate to teach a course section, consideration should be given to the time commitment necessary to develop an online course when assigning courses.” This consideration also allows faculty the opportunity to reflect on their experience each semester and to use their new insights to make adjustments the next time the course is offered....yielding a perfect example of applying the *scholarship of pedagogy*.

### Reduced Class Size

The first time that a faculty member teaches an online course, the class size is limited to 15 students. Seating capacity for subsequent courses taught by a faculty member is limited to 20 students. Seating capacity for traditional classroom settings averages 30 to 35 students. CCRI’s commitment to limiting the seating capacity for online offerings is another reflection of its dedication to providing students with a quality experience.

### Exemplary Course Standards

“CCRI establishes, publishes and encourages best practices for exemplary online courses based on research and past experience. Contractually, department chairs are responsible for monitoring the quality of any course regardless of delivery method. Online, anonymous post-course student evaluations will be administered to guide improvement of all distance courses. This evaluation measures the same learning outcomes as traditional sections of a course but also includes assessment of the unique methodology to provide feedback to the faculty member. Without regard to whether a particular distance learning course resides on CCRI’s in-house course management system or resides on a third-party server, the Vice President for Academic Affairs (and his/her designee), the relevant department chair (and his/her designee) and the distance learning coordinator shall have the same access to that course and its materials as any registered student. As between CCRI and the relevant faculty member, the CCRI Intellectual Property Policy governs the rights to and interests in any intellectual property included in that course or those materials.”

CCRI has identified the basic quality-related components that need to be included in all distance learning courses. To review this list, visit the following Web link:

<http://www.ccri.edu/distancefaculty/pdfs/DistanceLearningPolicy2008.pdf>

### Students and Library and Other Information Resources

The college clearly identifies courses offered in non-traditional learning modes in both its printed course schedule booklet and in its Web-based course schedule. The course schedule identifies the course delivery method for non-traditional course offerings both within the body of the course schedule and it calls out courses offered in different formats in a special section of the document. This dual listing of course delivery method allows students to search the range of department offerings and to go directly to courses that are being offered online. This requirement is noted in the college’s Distance Learning Policy and is cited here in quotes:

### Identifying course delivery method

“Alternative distance delivery of courses should be clearly identified in advance for students in the course bulletin and on the Available Courses website with a key available to let students know what to expect related to course delivery format and initial contact with instructor.

Department chairs, Enrollment Services staff, and Public Relations staff involved in production of course marketing materials use the agreed upon designations that distinguish fully online Web-based courses, telecourses, interactive video conferencing courses and blended (hybrid) courses from traditional formats on all publication media. Prospective Distance Learning Faculty will inform department chairs of the format intended for the distance learning offering and any special requirements or on-campus meetings that would be posted in the syllabus.”

Faculty teaching distance education courses are also required to post their syllabi online two weeks before classes begin. This practice allows students to review the course requirements in order to determine if they will be required to come to campus for specific portions of the course.

### Distance Learning Programming Development

One of the faculty co-chairs of the Distance Learning Advisory Committee – Professor Daniel Donovan – oversees the growth of distance programming and provides administrative coordination of student services such as advising and counseling, bookstore, library resources, accommodations assistance, as well as technology support services for students and faculty that access courses 24/7. This position provides a single point of contact for distance students and faculty in supporting and growing distance education.

Currently students are able to complete the following functions via an online format:

- Apply for admission
- Apply for financial aid
- Register for class
- Order books for class (Students have to come to campus to pick up their textbooks.)
- \*Complete library searches and request materials (Students have to come to campus to pick up materials they’ve requested.)
- Meet with faculty members during “virtual office hours” (Faculty indicate their parameters for responding to student questions via their syllabi; e.g., respond in 24 hours, respond daily except Sunday, etc.)
- Seek advising and career counseling online
- Online tutoring (College is currently exploring mechanisms that will permit it to offer tutoring services online)
- Complete exams online
- Submit work online

\*In order to utilize the library resources in an online format, students must obtain a college photo ID card that contains a barcode that permits access to the library collection. Many students do not get an ID card, so the library is working with various campus departments to create a system that permits students without a college photo ID card to utilize the system.

For a complete listing of the library databases available online, click on the following link:

<http://www.ccri.edu/Lerc/lib.htm>

Professor Donovan continues to conduct ongoing research on emerging technologies that may be adapted for additional delivery options. CCRI’s Department of Academic Affairs, in partnership with the Office of Institutional Research, conducts an ongoing analysis of current course offerings and identifies what areas are of most interest to students in building distance learning options.

## **Physical and Technological Resources**

The Community College of Rhode Island is experiencing incredible growth in available broadband network services and mobile access, together with the sophistication of emergent learning environments and adaptive multimedia technology. As a result, CCRI has 98 distance learning courses running in Fall 2009, with 60 faculty teaching 12 hybrid and 86 online, Web-based asynchronous courses in addition to nine courses being piloted on the new Blackboard server. The distance learning experience is greatly enhanced through the combination of innovative pedagogic strategies and dynamic, ubiquitous access to distributed learning technologies with 2000 students enrolled in distance learning courses this fall.

As a member of the OSHEAN consortium, CCRI has annually expanded its "dark fiber" connections to bring faster and larger pipelines of convergent data to its constituencies both on- and off-campus. OSHEAN, pronounced "ocean," is a consortium of non-profit organizations dedicated to the creation of the best statewide Internet in the country. For the distance learner, there are few limitations to what can be accomplished and in many ways; the level of service provided is comparable to on-campus support.

The Information Technology department at CCRI is defining a service-oriented architecture for systems interoperability, multimedia content exchange and learner knowledge sharing through its implementation of both the BlackBoard 9 and WebCT 4.1 learning management systems. The evolution of these teaching tools facilitates integration of Web 2.0 social networking services (blogs, wikis, community environments, etc.) with videoconferencing and other technologies enriching distance media and providing many benefits of face-to-face instruction. The ongoing progression of architecture and network capabilities offer possibilities for new technologies such as ubiquitous wireless, mobile laptop computing, personal digital assistants (PDAs), videoconferencing, video streaming, virtual reality and gaming environments for further enhancing distributed learning at CCRI. All these potential learning tools are offered through the dramatic increase in bandwidth collectively assembled at CCRI.

"Qualities of Service" priority settings for the CCRI network infrastructure are metered to provide preference for Voice over IP, network management protocols and video conferencing. The IT server network is undergoing a significant upgrade extending the desktop connections to a minimum of 1 Gbps. As high availability and accessibility for essential applications supporting distance learning is paramount, load balancing, redundancy and application acceleration are being improved as well. This greatly enhances the customer experience with applications such as Blackboard, the myCCRI portal and online, web services.

Distance learning applications are substantiated with ever-increasing bandwidth for high definition video conferencing, Voice over IP, video streaming and any other collaboration tools utilized by professors. Responsibility for providing classroom technology is shared by the Instructional Technology and the Media Services Division-ITMS, the multimedia equipment and end-user within IT. Classroom technology is implemented by these two groups based on the recommendations of the Information Technology Advisory Committee (ITAC), which itself is chaired by the Director of ITMS and comprised of faculty representatives and administrators.

Development and Administrative Network (OSHEAN) has provided the campus with an economical and high speed network. All classrooms and libraries at all campuses are currently provided with network connections. The campuses are 100 percent wireless. Computer equipment in all labs and libraries for faculty and staff are replaced on a planned cycle basis to ensure access to current technology and provide budget implications in advance.

The number of classrooms well-equipped with technology continued to grow over time, and today more than 85 percent of the classrooms provide sufficient technology equipment to support instruction needs. CCRI is cognizant of the high levels of service necessary to supply the demand and continues to appropriate purchases, replacement policies and installation of new in-place classroom technology to ameliorate this situation.

The campus has moved from a fully wired campus to a wireless campus with all classrooms and public shared spaces now having wireless access. The Internet bandwidth has been increased from a combined 9.9 Mbps to 38 Mbps. The number of technologically enhanced classrooms continues to grow. There are three tiers of classrooms defined on the Web site and training to use the classrooms is provided. Blackboard Enterprise, an improved Learning Management System, which offers additional software applications to support the teaching and learning process, was installed for Fall 2004 and upgraded in Fall 2006. Upgrades were made to improve email service for faculty and staff through the implementation of a Microsoft Exchange server.

The newly revamped Web site should make existing services more readily apparent to all students. Continued development of strategies for the online delivery of student services to facilitate access for all students and to minimize the need for online learners to come to campus will dynamically evolve over time.

There is a small group of faculty who thrive on innovation in their teaching and who are willing to attempt new teaching strategies, if ample support is provided. An instructional support team of four to five people support instructional design and course development. Recently, each staff member invested between 40 and 120 hours of training on course building, enhancing communications and assessing learners for online courses. The Distance Learning Advisory Committee has developed and maintained a distance learning Web site. In addition, there is a fully online course on distance learning pedagogy for online instructors. There is also a fully online course on WebCT basics for faculty.

Ongoing faculty development through the campus-based Centers for Instructional Technology have the greatest impact by offering hands-on training with various equipment, teaching tools and software packages to be utilized in the classroom. Instructional technologists are available on all campuses for consultation and project development in the use of these technologies. A series of workshops are offered each semester and Faculty Technology Days are held bi-annually. For more information, click on the following link:

<http://it.ccri.edu/instructech/>

As of Fall 2009, 85 percent of classrooms and labs at CCRI's four campuses are equipped with technology including 20 percent of these rooms that also have Smart Symposia writing displays and/or Document Cameras. Additionally, 11 percent are electronic classrooms, equipped with an instructor workstation and 25 to 30 PCs for student use to promote Web-enhanced instruction and engaged learning. Each campus offers high definition videoconferencing technology to support distance learning and hybrid courses. Academic and departmental computer labs and student support areas such as the libraries and Student Success Centers provide numerous computers for student use whenever campuses are open. Twenty wireless mobile laptop carts can be delivered to classrooms or labs to support „just-in-time“ and inquiry-based learning.

Wireless infrastructure has been completed at all of CCRI's campuses. Wireless access enhances the learning environment for students and faculty by providing connectivity to electronic resources from anywhere on campus. CCRI has developed four levels of technology equipped classrooms:

Level I Classrooms:

- Computer and LCD Projector
- CD/DVD Player
- Instructor's PC Station
- Whiteboards, Adjustable Lighting, Speakers

Level II Classrooms (includes Level I technology):

- Document Camera and/or Symposium (Electronic whiteboard)
- Instructor's Multimedia Workstation with Level I Technology

Level III Classrooms (includes Level I technology):

- Student Computer Work Stations
- Instructor's Multimedia Workstation

Dual Projection in some rooms

Document Camera or Interactive Writing Display (Symposium)

Level IV Classrooms (includes Level I technology):

Videoconferencing Technology

Touch Panel Technology Control System

LCD Flat Panels, Electronic Screens, Sound Systems

Document Camera and Interactive Smart Board or Display

For a list of classroom technology and resources, go to

<http://it.ccri.edu/classrooms/techclassrooms.shtml>

CCRI continues to increase the number of "smart" classrooms, upgrades to existing equipment, re-wires of network closets and to purchase higher bandwidth switch capacity to provide outstanding service for distance education at the college. With expansion and improvement of the training and professional development efforts already in place, more faculty members can leverage these resources and place more curricula online.

Improvements in the myCCRI portal capitalize on self-service, Web-based offerings of e-mail, course-related information, grades, registration, advising and naturally the learning management systems to offer one-stop shopping for students either at the college or from a distance. Faculty and staff can access all online information and services from anywhere at any time.

In the coming year, Information Technology will be developing a comprehensive plan embracing all technology on the four campuses with contributions from all advisory committees. This directive will assist in budgeting, management and provision of the infrastructure, instructional technology and media services supporting, improving and extending distance learning in the years to come.

### **Financial Resources**

In order to provide diverse, alternative learning environments, CCRI recognizes the role that online education plays in creating multiple learning environments intended to better serve CCRI's current and prospective students. CCRI is especially aware of the additional management and financial challenges that might accompany the initiative. However, CCRI is already very vested in support of the technological environment from increasing the number of smart classrooms being put on-line, to software support for Web CT and Blackboard products, to professional development of faculty in designing and implementing new course work. Approximately 7.5 percent of the college's unrestricted budget is dedicated to all forms of technology within the institution, the equivalent of an excess of \$7 million per fiscal year. CCRI has also been the beneficiary in recent years of state technology initiatives as well as private grants that helped supplement the unrestricted budget. While Rhode Island is experiencing the same difficult fiscal times as most other states and state appropriations have lessened, CCRI's enrollment has helped to stabilize our revenue sources. The expansion of online education is another factor that will help to contribute to a fiscally healthy enrollment base.

### **Public Disclosure**

CCRI has already established protocols for providing accurate and timely information to students regarding specific requirements within non-traditional learning environments. All of the college's publications-both hard copies of the course catalog and the Web-based schedule of course offerings-include detailed information regarding course expectations. All courses that involve distance learning formats indicate when students are required to come to campus, including the specific CCRI campus location associated with each course.

Course syllabi for distance education courses are posted two weeks prior to the beginning of classes so that students may check out course requirements in advance of selecting their courses.

CCRI's has decided to support "blended" degree programs in which a portion of the program credits must be completed in traditional classroom settings. Because of this requirement, CCRI will post

detailed information in multiple places in its publications indicating the schedule of course offerings as well as the locations and formats of those course offerings for all courses required in the degree program.

In addition, as part of admission process to any program in which more than 50 percent of the courses are offered in a distance learning format, students will have to sign a statement acknowledging their understanding that they will be required to come to a CCRI campus to complete previously identified courses as well as to complete assignments identified within certain courses.

In summary, CCRI is taking a pro-active role to make sure that students are made aware of expectations that will require their presence on one of CCRI's campuses.

### **Integrity**

CCRI has taken a very thoughtful and methodical approach to incorporating technology into its pedagogical repertoire. Through this process of integrating Web-based learning features within its traditional classroom settings, CCRI has developed a solid cohort of faculty who are comfortable not only using the technology, but who also see the significant benefits that technology contributes to creating richer learning environments.

CCRI is proud of its achievements in creating a vibrant array of technology applications that assist students, faculty and staff in creating a virtually seamless set of operations to support multiple learning environments across Rhode Island. The college does not anticipate a rush to add programs in which more than 50 percent of the courses can be completed online. Instead, it will continue to add distance learning formats in the same methodical and thoughtful way that has brought it to this point of readiness.



**INSTITUTION: Community College of Rhode Island**

**TABLE 2. Students**

*Note: For Enrollment and other data, use data from current or most recently completed semester for which data are available.*

**Programs and Certificates in which 50% or more of the courses may be completed entirely on-line**

<b>Program or Certificate Name</b>	<b>Matriculated Students</b>	<b>Degree or Certificate Completers to Date</b>	<b>Total Number of Students Taking Courses on Ground*</b>	<b>In-State Students Taking Courses On-Line</b>	<b>Out-of-State Students Taking Courses On-Line</b>	<b>Students Based in Other Countries Taking Courses</b>	<b>Total Number of Students Taking Courses On-Line</b>
None of our existing programs provide for completing 50% or more of required courses in a distance learning format.							0
							0
							0
							0
							0
							0
							0
							0
							0
							0
							0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>

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**INSTITUTION: Community College of Rhode Island**

**TABLE 3. Faculty**

*Note: For Enrollment and other data, use data from current or most recently completed semester for which data are available.*

**Programs and Certificates in which 50% or more of the courses may be completed entirely on-line**

Program or Certificate Name	Faculty Teaching in The Program (Headcount)				FTE Faculty in Program	Number with Highest Degree	
	Faculty Employed Full Time at The Institution		Faculty Employed PT at The Institution	Total Faculty in Program		Ph.D or Equivalent	Masters or Equivalent
	FT in Program	PT in Program					
None of our existing programs provide for completing 50% or more of required courses in a distance learning format.				0			
				0			
				0			
				0			
				0			
				0			
				0			
				0			
				0			
				0			
				0			
				0			
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>

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**INSTITUTION: Community College of Rhode Island**

**TABLE 4. Course enrollments and completions**

*Note: For Enrollment and other data, use data from current or most recently completed semester for which data are available.*

**Programs and Certificates in which 50% or more of the courses may be completed entirely on-line**

<b>Courses Offered On-Line</b>	<b>Fall</b>	<b>Spring</b>	<b>Year Total*</b>	<b>Fall</b>	<b>Spring</b>	<b>Year Total*</b>	<b>Fall</b>	<b>Spring</b>
<b>Undergraduate</b> None of our existing programs provide for completing 50% or more of required courses in a distance learning format.								
Total Number of courses								
Total on-line enrollments								
On-line course completions								
<b>Graduate</b>								
Total Number of courses								
Total on-line enrollments								
On-line course completions								
<b>TOTAL</b>								
<b>Total Number of courses</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Total on-line enrollments</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>On-line course completions</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>

\* For year total, include all offerings, including Fall and Spring terms, short-terms, summer, and non-term-based offerings