Leadership Vision and
e-Learning Plan

Daniel Ward
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Introduction

Online and blended learning have seen an increased demand across higher education throughout the nation. Students are able to complete course work according to their own professional and personal commitments. Courses delivered with supplemented online learning technologies require students to be able to sufficiently utilize technology in order to meet the learning objectives of the courses and programs. This requirement places an obligation on institutions of higher education to provide ongoing pedagogical and technical support to their learners.

Diverse University, a minority-serving institution in an urban location in a metropolitan area in the Northeast region of the country, has a population of students with different needs. Economic factors require students to complete course work at different paces and spend various amounts of time on campus. Course loads of some students are below the requirements for being considered a full-time student. High attrition rates at the institution are attributed to factors related to: professional and personal obligations, personal finances and poor performance in enrolled courses.

Instructors at Diverse University have shared that they are unaware of how technologies can help their teaching methods in order to positively affect the quality of their courses. They are cognizant of the fact that the majority of their students do not have the necessary skills to adequately and efficiently utilize technology. Providing resources and professional development opportunities to faculty and students will ensure that Diverse University is providing high-quality learning environments to their diverse student population. This e-Learning plan will provide Diverse University a blueprint for integrating professional development on the use of educational technologies for faculty and students in order to address high attrition rates.

Vision

Providing access to education for Diverse University's current and prospective students is at the forefront of the institution's mission.   The proper utilization of technology by faculty and students will address this goal as the demand for alternative modes of college-level education is on the rise (Irvine, et. al., 2013, p. 172). The integration of technology in courses will provide students with more opportunities to adapt to their learning environment to accommodate their lifestyles and skills. Constructionist learning theory, as described by Papert, suggests that students who have concrete experiences and opportunities for reflection can form abstract concepts and understandings of a subject matter (Blikstein, 2013). Educational technology can aid in the development of this type of learning environment with opportunities for students to be consciously engaged both inside and outside of the classroom.

Diverse University's public spaces on campus are filled with students, including in library study spaces, academic departments' hallways, college club spaces and outdoor gathering areas. Students are often seen reading from notes written in notebooks and textbooks and speaking with students. When observing students on laptops, they are typically using word processing documents or casually surfing personal social media platforms. Students' eagerness to learn and network with their classmates is apparent from these observations. The perception of technology among students who do not spend time on campus is unknown. Addressing the needs of all learners, regardless of their preferred course modality or presence on campus, is a priority of the institution.

Studies show that students' proficiency with utilizing educational technologies in their academic careers is lacking. Specifically, students' level of acceptance of technology integration is low and their information-searching skills are insufficient (Chan, et. al., 2016). Increasing

students' awareness of the benefits of properly using technologies in education will increase

students' interaction with courses which are enhanced with innovative web-components. Chan

et. al. (2016) found that the integration of a technology support system for students proved to be

a beneficial "performance support process" and not a one-time instance of educational support

(p. 56).

Equipping university instructors with effective approaches to utilizing and integrating

technologies will foster a common understanding of the benefits of the available tools. The

techniques, methods and procedures practiced when using technology in college-level courses

has a direct effect on how students will benefit from the use of the technologies (Shah and

Mahmood, 2016, p. 496). Regularly scheduled professional development sessions on proper

pedagogy and technical skills and training provide instructors with the essential skills and

confidence needed for using educational technologies.

Reid (2017) explained that training of instructors requires guidance with integrating

technologies effectively. Every professional development session for educators must include

several key components in order to be effectively implemented. Professional development

sessions must advise instructors on: setting technology integration goals, ways technology can

support students, provide examples of technologies in use, and feedback on how well they

exhibited an understanding of technology integration (Reid, 2017, p. 377).

The development and facilitation of an ongoing student-centered educational technology

training program will provide Diversity University's students with the necessary toolkit of

knowledge and skills to utilize the implemented e-Learning technologies in the best way

possible. As previously explained in existing case studies, the results of implementation is likely

to increase student engagement with course content, activities, instructors and peers. The

development and facilitation of ongoing faculty-centered educational technology workshops will address the underlying skills needed to incorporate technologies and promote self-efficacy in this area which would benefit both the university and student population.

E-Learning Plan

Colleges and universities often provide drop-in IT support services to enrolled students on their campuses. Students are able to address technology concerns on an as needed basis as issues or as questions arise. Diverse University's campus offers the same format of technical support for their students which is located in the main computer lab. This setup is sufficient for students who have extra time to stay on campus for technology-related issues. This format does not, however, address the needs of students who are not able to spend time, outside of scheduled classroom meeting times, to address technology concerns. Furthermore, these services do not provide students with an on-going workshop series addressing the various educational technology tools utilized across all academic disciplines.

Faculty at Diverse University are automatically provided with a Blackboard course space for every course they are teaching. This provides an opportunity for instructors to use this space at their discretion. However, the institution is lacking the necessary professional development opportunities for both on and off-campus faculty that would provide them with a toolkit to utilize the Blackboard platform at its highest potential. Although, training is provided by two Educational Technologists, resources are not allocated to the development of faculty who are expected to web-enhance face-to-face courses or deliver blended and online courses.

The main focus of this e-Learning implementation plan is to allocate additional resources to the support of students and the professional development of faculty. These services will be

provided throughout the academic year with fewer opportunities for support and professional development during the summer intercessions, due to decreased demand.

Student support and technology workshops will be promoted by the Online Learning department and students will be encouraged to attend by faculty utilizing educational technologies in their courses. Topics covered in the student workshops will include: Active Learning Opportunities in Blackboard, Peer-to-Peer Learning in Blackboard, Mobile Technologies for Online Learning, and Blackboard Basics for Students. Faculty development workshops will be promoted and encouraged by the Provost's office. These workshop topics will include: Best Practices in Utilizing Blackboard, Blackboard Basics, Faculty Showcases, and Integrating Various Technologies into Blackboard. Both workshop series will be offered in on-campus and online formats.

The implementation plan will be proposed to the Provost, who oversees the Department of Online Learning and faculty. Permission to develop and design the workshops outlined in the plan will be requested. New faculty who have never taught blended or online learning courses will be required to attend at least two Blackboard professional development sessions in the proposed plan. In order to follow institutional procedures, a proposal will also be sent to the University Senate for a vote and approval. Additionally, a request to allocate university funds and resources for Instructional Designers, a position that does not currently exist at the university, will be requested. If funds are not available, alternative funding from available grants will be applied for. The two Instructional Designers will also be responsible for developing, designing, and facilitating student-centered workshops. Implementation of this e-Learning plan is dependent on additional resources.

Face-to-face and online workshops for both students and faculty will be offered throughout each academic semester. In order to reach faculty who primarily teach online and students who are not physically on campus throughout the academic year, online and synchronous webinars versions of the workshops will be offered. For individuals who have completed the face-to-face and online workshops, recordings of the sessions will be available for future review and playback. The university has procured a license for Panopto Lecture Capture software which will be used to facilitate live webinars and for recording of online and face-to-face workshops.

Change Issues

The faculty population at Diverse University includes some instructors who are reluctant to utilize educational technologies in their courses. In order to address this issue, faculty showcases will take place which will share how educational technologies enhanced the delivery of courses. This implementation will enlighten reluctant faculty on how their courses can be designed and delivered more efficiently to address and improve student learning outcomes.

Twenty-percent of the population of faculty at the university do not attend educational technology trainings. The support and promotion of the workshops by the Provost's office will increase the attendance of pedagogical and technology-related workshops. Furthermore, faculty will be encouraged to include their proof of attendance and copies of their certificates of completion to their professional portfolios for promotion and reappointment applications.

The attendance of students in offered workshops is expected to be low without the promotion of the workshop series. Academic advisors and faculty will be tasked with recommending students, who exhibit difficulty with using educational technologies, to attend relevant workshops.

Proof of Completion

Faculty who complete the professional development workshops will be advised that students who successfully complete trainings and workshops will be provided with a certificate of completion. Faculty can request a copy of the certificates from the students, which may be submitted through their Blackboard courses. This process will allow faculty, who require their students to complete a specific workshop, to be provided with proof that their students are proficient in the tools that will be utilized in their courses.

Faculty who have successfully completed workshops related to educational technologies will be provided with a certificate of completion. These certificates can be downloaded by the workshop participants and a copy of the certificate will be collected and archived by the Department of Online Learning. The Department of Online Learning will provide a list of new faculty interested in teaching blended and online courses who have completed the required workshops to ensure compliance with the newly instated requirement. This list will ensure this requirement will be enforced by the Provost and University Senate.

Leadership Approaches

A team leadership approach will be used by the plan implementer when developing, designing and facilitating the faculty technology workshops. Individual instructors will be given opportunities to apply the concepts learned in the workshops to the academic disciplines of the courses which they teach. Each workshop will include allotted time for faculty members to share what they have learned and how they feel the educational technologies can be applied in their courses. This collaboration will provide other workshop participants with ideas on how they can use their peers' examples learned within their own courses. As Northouse (2016) explains, "Effective team performance begins with how the leader sees the situation that the team is

experiencing. This mental model reflects…the environmental and organizational contingencies that define the larger context of team action." (p. 366). The facilitators will monitor how the faculty members contribute their personal expertise in their academic areas with their level of understanding of the educational technologies being taught. The facilitator will address areas of weakness during the group activities which are built into the workshops.

A transformational leadership approach will be used when developing, designing and facilitating the student technology workshops. As Northouse (2016) explains, this type of leader "engages with others and creates a connection that raises the level of motivation and morality in both the leader and the follower" (p. 162). The workshops' designs will focus on the how the educational technologies will affect the learning process in their courses which utilize such tools. As the plan coordinator implements the workshops, he/she will address the needs of the participants so that they reach their highest potential of incorporating technologies to enhance student outcomes. With this information, the workshop facilitators can alter the faculty-centered workshops based on feedback and observations from the students' workshops.

<div align="center">**Funding Plan**</div>

The revenue stream that will be produced by the proposed e-Learning implementation plan will outweigh the plan's costs. The increased revenue stream will be produced from the expected higher retention rates from the initiative. Additionally, the university's annual expenditures for educational technologies will be more valuable to the institution. Blackboard's functionality will be used at a higher capacity by both faculty and students. As new programs and courses are approved and created, the newly hired instructional designers will be on task to assist with effective course design. The instructional designers will also be responsible for

ensuring that the faculty and students are equipped with the necessary knowledge to be successful in using the educational technologies.

The university will acquire a higher reputation as graduated students enter the workforce as professionals. Their information literacy skills will improve from the e-Learning plan which will lead to more successful careers in reputable companies and organizations. As students excel in their academic and professional lives, the university's reputation will improve.

The projected costs expected from the e-Learning implementation plan include:

Instructional Designer 1:	$55,000
Instructional Designer 2:	$55,000
Total:	$110,000

Note: The salaries for the two Instructional Designers is subject to annual increases due to the affiliated union's bargaining schedule.

Diverse University is known to have the lowest tuition out of all the public universities in the state. In an effort to keep this reputation and ranking, this implementation plan will not request an increase in tuition or fees to fund it. Majority of the student population enrolled in courses at the university are from low-income families and are often employed in at least one job to pay for tuition and unrelated financial obligations. Funding from outside sources will be utilized to subsidize the plan.

Diversity University should strive to apply for and be awarded funds from available grant sources for initial funding implementation of the e-Learning plan. There is an abundance of available grant sources which can be used to fund the university's initiative. For example, the *Michael and Susan Dell Foundation* awards funds, ranging from $500 to several millions of dollars, in order to address students success initiatives and increasing access to high-quality

education (https://www.msdf.org/apply/). The *Valero Energy Foundation* provides funds to non-profit organizations which support education and basic human needs (https://valero.versaic.com/login). The *Corning Incorporated Foundation* provides funds to organizations that are focused on improving student learning outcomes by addressing teaching and learning strategies in various academic disciplines (http://www.corningincfoundation.org/our_focus/education/).

In the event that grant applications are declined, alternative sources will be utilized. Student-paid technology fees, which are already instated for all enrolled students will be assessed and appropriated to the e-Learning plan's budget as needed. This will be a temporary change in the allocation of funds; once the expected increased revenue streams are realized the original technology fee appropriations will be restored.

Conclusion

This e-Learning plan proposal is aimed to address the needs of Diverse University's student population and faculty utilizing educational technologies in online and blended learning environments. Since online and blended learning courses are rapidly expanding, the university must take action to provide students with high-quality implementation of supplemental online learning technologies so students are able to sufficiently utilize technology in order to meet the learning objectives of the courses and programs. Providing ongoing pedagogical and technical support to learners and instructors is the main goal of the e-Learning plan.

In order for the plan to be successful, support and participation from administration, faculty, students and instructional and technical staff is necessary. By properly facilitating the first round of workshops, acceptance of the change and inception of the program will contribute

to an on-going university culture of utilizing educational technology tools to enhance the teaching and learning initiatives for online and blended courses.

   The Department of Institutional Effectiveness will be able to provide the university with student learning outcomes in order to gauge the results from the implemented plan. The Department of Online Learning will survey students and faculty to measure the perceptions of the workshops and how they affected students' learning and involvement in the online and blended courses. These results will provide the university with data on areas for improvement in the existing student and faculty workshops and areas for expansion with additional workshops. This on-going e-Learning implementation plan is expected to improve student success and outcomes for all blended and online courses currently offered and have a lasting impact on students, faculty and the university.

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