



Task Force on e-Learning

Final Report

August 15, 2011

**Task Force on e-Learning
Executive Summary
August 15, 2011**

I. Goals

1. UIC should develop mastery across the spectrum of educational technology, from face-to-face to blended to fully online, in order to support faculty and students in using the best delivery modes for each program, and to ensure the highest quality teaching and learning.
2. UIC should strive to benefit from these technologies to clear up curricular bottlenecks, increase retention and graduation rates, reduce time to degree, eliminate gaps in achievement, and increase the efficiency of classroom space utilization.
3. UIC should prudently seek new enrollments in areas of online learning where there is a match between well-defined market demand and UIC's academic strengths, and where there is potential to develop and sustain programs on a revenue-positive basis.

II. General Findings:

1. UIC must improve its technological infrastructure and faculty and student support (specifically including instructional design support) in order to remain competitive for existing on-campus programs as well as for new online and blended programs.
2. UIC should investigate market potential for new online and blended programs in professional areas, especially in the health professions, at all degree and certificate levels, and for undergraduate degree completion programs.
3. At all times, academic program development must be faculty-governed and consistent with University standards of academic quality.

III. Specific Findings:

1. UIC's current infrastructure for educational technology and instructional design is inadequate. The recent study by the Huron Group, commissioned by UA as part of its ARR process, recognizes the historic under-investment in learning technology at UIC.

Recommendation: UIC should participate vigorously in the new ACCC structure to ensure the strong development of its technological infrastructure. This includes use of the campus IT committee and other mechanisms for input, especially around budget.

2. UIC's current learning management system, Blackboard, has been the subject of significant debate regarding its reliability and flexibility.

Recommendation: Through its ACCC Educational Subcommittee, UIC should investigate alternative and multiple learning management systems to support instruction. UIC and ACCC should support faculty efforts to navigate these systems for course development and enhancement. Analysis of learning management systems should incorporate faculty and student inputs, and decisions about adoption should be driven primarily by identifiable educational benefits.

3. UIC's central units providing teacher and student support are understaffed, underfunded, and fragmented. At the same time, considerable expertise resides among these units and with individual faculty members at the unit level.

Recommendation: UIC should combine existing units to create a new *Center for Contemporary Teaching and Learning*, providing strong support for both teachers and students, with an emphasis on emerging pedagogies and androgogies. Leadership of the Center should be representative of the faculty perspective. The Center should interface with external associations and organizations with the purpose of maintaining current information about trends in technology and e-learning. The Center should hold regular workshops, provide reasonable incentives to faculty for course and program development, and set and disseminate technological standards. The Center should provide online placement test services to academic units, instructional design services, and explore the feasibility of 24/7 teacher and student support. Center activities should be coordinated with CETL. Through its focus on learning technologies, the Center should reinforce the tutoring support provided by ACE, LARES, AAAN, MERRP, the Honors College Tutoring Center, and others.

4. UIC has made notable progress in recent years in improvement of classroom technology for traditional on-campus undergraduates. This includes the remodeling of Lincoln & Douglas Halls, and continued expansion of computer labs and learning labs.

Recommendation: UIC should continue its improvement of classroom learning technology in order to enhance learning and increase its competitiveness for on-campus students, including out-of-state and international students. UIC should continue its vigorous pursuit of external corporate support for these enhancements.

5. UIC has demonstrated the potential for blended learning via its Sloan Foundation Blended Learning project.

Recommendation: Clarify the best uses of blended learning for UIC in the present moment and foreseeable future, and support blended learning around these strategic uses. Among the possible uses of blended learning are:

a) for traditional on-campus students, to unpack schedules, increase classroom utilization, improve instruction for large-enrollment classes, and reduce bottlenecks that slow progress to graduation;

b) for new audiences, to develop evening and weekend programs aimed at the Chicago metropolitan area, especially in professional, degree-completion, and certificate areas.

6. The UIC School of Continuing Studies has successfully “brought home” its three Global Campus programs (RN-to-BSN, BBA, MPSL). This success has depended on the identification and adoption of strong models for market analysis, program development, teacher and student support, and revenue flow.

Recommendation: UIC should reaffirm the mandate of the SCS to expand this model to additional new online and blended programs. The SCS should make use of its proven mechanisms for providing enhanced levels of market research, program development, revenue management, student recruitment and support, and program assessment.

7. UIC processes are slow for bringing new programs to market, even in areas of critical need. Processes can be made more rapid and adaptable without impinging on academic integrity.

Recommendation: The forms for new program review should be revised to allow simultaneous review of all new programs and courses for delivery in face-to-face, blended, and online formats. Academic Affairs should work with faculty review committees to develop strong, clear procedures around e-learning and reinforce awareness and understanding of review processes.

8. UIC continues to suffer from internal administrative barriers of its own making that impede progress and place unnecessary burdens on faculty, staff, and students.

Recommendation: The Provost should request the UIC Administrative Review and Restructuring Task Force-Internal (ARRTF-Internal) to look specifically at administrative barriers around e-learning, including part-of-term registration and the ability of students to “commute” between online and face-to-face courses. This administrative review should continue on an iterative annual cycle.

University of Illinois at Chicago
e-Learning Task Force
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I. Overview

A. Background

For more than a decade, educational leaders and technology experts have predicted that the internet will bring disruptive change to higher education. That change is no longer in the future—it is well underway, affecting how teachers teach, how students learn, and how knowledge is constituted. A new industry of higher learning has sprung up, and venerable institutions have put in place major efforts to re-make existing structures.

UIC has responded to the challenges of e-learning with fine efforts by individuals, departments, colleges, and a successful, grant-funded pilot project in blended learning. [Appendix C provides a census of existing programs and enrollments]. At the campus level, however, UIC has failed to sustain a large-scale, coordinated response. As a result, UIC faces threats to the quality and attractiveness of its existing programs, and faces the possibility of missing significant opportunities for new or refocused programs in its areas of major strength.

In Spring, 2011, at the instigation of Chancellor Paula Allen-Meares, Interim Provost Jerry Baumann appointed a task force to assess the condition of e-learning at UIC and make recommendations for immediate, practical steps that would restore initiative and innovation to e-learning at UIC. The interim provost also charged the task force to keep at the forefront of its deliberations the constrained resources of UIC and the University of Illinois. (The Charge is attached as Appendix B). In response, this report outlines a series of pragmatic and prudent steps for the immediate term, aimed at re-starting or re-energizing UIC's e-learning initiatives.

B. Principles

The Task Force identified six principles to guide the campus in next-stage development of e-learning:

- e-learning at UIC must meet the same standards of excellence as established face-to-face programs;
- e-learning efforts at the undergraduate level should help to address existing issues with academic progress and graduation rates;
- e-learning efforts should offer strategies for maximizing the utilization of UIC's physical plant, including classrooms, libraries, laboratories and learning centers;
- e-learning in undergraduate, graduate, and professional programs should address issues of access, including physical access and the opportunity costs of visiting campus;
- e-learning initiatives should be at least revenue-neutral (after pay-downs of investment start-ups), and in selected areas of strength should be a source of significant enhanced revenue.
- e-learning initiatives require a stable and sustained planning environment, defined by the Provost and Chancellor, to encourage and nurture investment by academic units.

C. Dimensions for Development

The Task Force identified three major dimensions for development of e-learning at UIC:

- Technological enhancement of teaching and learning is needed for traditional classroom students. There is increasing evidence and experience suggesting that well-applied technology can enhance learning. Also, as adoption widens and students come to the university expecting a technologically-rich environment, a failure to adopt can constitute a competitive disadvantage.
- Through the impact of the Sloan-funded Blended Initiative, UIC has developed a campus consensus around the value of blended learning for an institution in a concentrated metropolitan area, as an optimal solution to multiple objectives while maintaining quality.
- Pure distance learning provides significant opportunities for development of programs directed toward place-bound students, especially in professional fields.

D. Elements

The Task Force identified six major elements that must be addressed for next-stage development of e-learning. Not only must these six elements be robust, but they

must be coordinated. Hence while the key energy for program development will likely be “bottom-up,” there is an irreplaceable role for a centralized commitment and coordination from Academic Affairs. The six major elements are:

- enrollment planning
- educational-technological infrastructure
- faculty development
- student preparedness
- program review and assessment
- market research, program development, and marketing

Each of these elements is addressed as an issue in the next section of this report.

In addition to these six elements, the Task Force identified an additional and persistent issue: external and internal barriers to innovation. As a wise UIC dean once observed, “this place may be too new to have many traditions, but it sure has a lot of bad habits.” Calls to remove internal barriers are now an almost mandatory part of any report. That does not mean that task forces are crying wolf; rather, it means that many good recommendations await action.

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Issue 1: What are UIC’s plans for enrollment change?

UIC should plan to expand enrollments in areas where there is a match among student needs, UIC academic strengths, and tuition or other revenue sources. Online and blended learning are potential areas, including programs targeted toward professionals. Workforce training is a concern for all degree levels; however, UIC should not attempt to compete where community colleges already are focused, and should concentrate on areas of advanced training, such as the health sciences.

UIC should avoid specific overall numerical targets or strict timelines for enrollment growth: it is more important to do the job well. However, individual program development should be governed by clear metrics, including academic strength, time to market, suitability to target audience, and potential revenue.

UIC’s target areas as outlined in the “Global Campus 2.0 Plan” should be re-visited.

Issue 2: Educational-technological infrastructure

Significant enhancements are needed for both traditional classroom students as well as for students in blended and pure-online environments.

A recent study conducted by the Huron Group on behalf of the University of Illinois Administrative Review and Restructuring IT subcommittee made several key recommendations to achieve efficiencies and cost-savings through economies of scale.

These recommendations are now being implemented:

- The University should appoint a University wide CIO to coordinate IT policy among the three campuses, so as to achieve University-wide efficiencies.
- An IT governance process should be put in place, so that IT policy, IT needs, and resources can be better coordinated.

Such a governance structure had already been proposed by the UIC IT task force, and is being put in place at UIC. At the University-wide level there currently exist two governance structures:

- The Information Technology Priorities Committee (ITPC), which is responsible for prioritizing administrative systems initiatives University wide. The scope of this process is designed to encompass all human resource, payroll, finance or student administrative systems as well as related technical initiatives. The ITPC would seem to relate to e-learning only to the extent that e-learning initiatives lead to the need to create modifications to student administrative systems owned by AITS.
- The University Technology Management Team (UTMT), which articulates the Information Technology strategic direction for the University of Illinois in areas where strategic directions are common for all campuses. The membership of the UTMT consists of the campus CIO's, the University Executive CIO, and a member of the Senates Conference.

In order to coordinate with the new UI-IT structure, the UIC-IT task force has recommended the creation of a UIC IT Governance Committee to advise the Chancellor, Provost, and other Vice Chancellors on IT policy, priorities, and resource allocation. The Education Subcommittee of the IT Governance Committee advises the full committee on IT policy and resource allocation issues which impact UIC's educational mission. This would include choices of learning management systems, levels of support for the LMS(s), the nature of service level agreements, and other issues relating to use of IT to deliver education at UIC. The committee's membership includes stakeholders in IT support of education, as well as representation from the Senate Academic Services Committee.

A key question is how the new UIC IT Governance Committee will participate in campus and University-wide governance and resource allocation. *How, for instance will the IT Educational Subcommittee coordinate with SCEP, the Grad College Executive Committee, and CETL? And how exactly*

will it impact the allocation of resources? At this point UIC IT is funded by UIC, even though the UIC CIO reports to the University Executive CIO.

Issue 3: Faculty Development

At the 2009 UIC Leadership Retreat on technology, two breakout groups on e-learning reported a strong consensus on two points. First, online and blended learning were perceived as offering significant benefits. Second, and in order to garner those benefits, UIC needed to significantly increase its support of faculty development, especially through creation of a centralized place for faculty and staff to go for assistance. Particular areas for support include:

- Developing/creating/designing online and blended courses
- Identifying learning outcomes
- Using available technologies
- Educating/training instructors about best practices
- Online testing and placement services

Existing efforts were felt to be diffuse, uncoordinated, under-resourced, understaffed and therefore under-utilized and inefficient. Thus, a re-organization is mandated. An e-Learning Center (referred to hereafter as the *Center for Contemporary Teaching and Learning*) should bring together campus expertise from ACCC, the University Library, Center for Teaching and Learning/Faculty Affairs, and External Education to focus on the provision of instructional and technical support. There was particular enthusiasm for a center that would provide leadership on issues of instructional design and assessment, be responsive to changing technologies and oversee issues of technical maintenance.

The new Center for Contemporary Teaching and Learning should report within Academic Affairs as determined by the Provost, with the goal of reinforcing its mission, focus and accountability. Funding should be from the tuition revenue stream. The CCTL should establish a baseline service agreement with academic programs so that the benefits it offers are clear, and expenditures transparent and justified.

The organization of the CCTL should provide for a clear point of primary contact with each academic unit. CETL should consider expanding its activities to act as an academic advisory board to the CCTL. UIC should draw on the significant expertise available at the Springfield campus, especially its Center for Online Learning, Research and Service.

Issue 4: Student Preparation

With the proliferation of online programs as well as the offering of online courses to campus-based students, the digital divide that has been extensively written

about and debated has become more evident in higher education. It is true that many students have grown up with technology and are comfortable using it; however there are many others who, due to the lack of means, opportunity or ability, are unable to effectively participate in online education offerings. In order to fully utilize the capabilities of online education technology and offer access to as many students as possible, it will be necessary to offer an orientation and support program for students who are interested in or required to take online courses.

Following are highlights of an online orientation and support program:

- Program should be put together and operated by the same unit(s) who provide faculty development support (since many of the topics will be common to both).
- Program should be multi-tiered, offering support for students with varying levels of knowledge about technology and online learning.
- Program should offer support for more than just how to use the technology. It should emphasize how to be successful in online courses (i.e. time management, how to participate effectively in discussion forums, how to participate “remotely” on team projects, etc.).
- Appropriate programs should be offered for both undergraduate and graduate students.
- The lead unit (CCTL) should compile current material from the School of Continuing Studies, Instructional Technology Lab, and other groups on campus who offer or support online programs (e.g. College of Applied Health Sciences) as a starting point.

In addition, the University should offer a robust help desk operation that provides technical assistance to faculty and students who own a variety of desktops, laptops, mobile devices and other hardware/software they will use to access the online course offerings. It might be best if both the support program and help desk were operated by the same unit.

Most of the resources for the “student preparation” unit can be put together from the various personnel across the campus who currently provide the similar services (SCS, ITL, various colleges, etc.). Depending on the plan for the orientation and support program, there may be an initial need for additional resources to develop and implement the program as well as to organize the new unit, document processes, establish service agreements, etc.

Issue 5: Program Review & Assessment

UIC program review and assessment processes are currently designed primarily for traditional face-to-face instruction. Criteria for review of new and revised online and blended programs are not widely understood, leading to inconsistency in review committees and uncertainty for proposers.

A critical dimension of faculty and instructional development is the dissemination of standards and best practices for online and blended learning, thereby strengthening the review processes as well as instruction itself. Specifically, Academic Affairs should use the Sloan-C Quality Scorecard as a reference point, should ensure that SCEP and other review committees have access to best practices in e-learning, and should mount workshops and panel discussions to promote discussion among faculty of issues related to online and blended learning.

Currently, new or revised programs are reviewed separately according to mode of delivery. Program review procedures should be revised to support simultaneous review of programs in both face-to-face and e-learning formats.

Issue 6: Market Research, Program Development, and Marketing

Although a number of UIC's fully online programs do allow enrollment by students enrolled in campus degree programs, the presumptive audiences for fully online programs are students who are either geographically distant or who are prevented from enrolling in campus programs by work or other significant commitments. At this point, we assume that fully online programs are not developed simply to provide scheduling or format alternatives to students already enrolled in campus degree programs. The assumption of a "net new" working adult as the target for fully online programs, and the related assumption of the program very likely needing to compete for students with other online programs, point to the need for careful and coordinated research, development and marketing.

UIC's marketing strategy for e-learning programs targeted toward "net new enrollment" should be driven by the School of Continuing Studies in accordance with the following model:

Market Assessment

A market assessment, ideally undertaken before any significant investment is made in developing a program, should seek to identify the following:

- who the target audience is
- the nature of their interest in this kind of program
- potential size and depth of the market; conditions that may influence market size

- where the potential students are; how they can best be reached
- what program features and attributes are meaningful to them (either curricular or structural)
- possible competitor programs and whether there is room in the market for the proposed program.

Generally, determining and defining the market for a program is an iterative process that starts with gathering broad, readily available information-- for example, through environmental scans and labor statistics. If the initial studies suggest that there is a potential market for the proposed program, additional studies including both quantitative and qualitative research can be conducted. At each stage of the process, the size and interest of the target audience are further defined. At the same time, features and attributes that will be critical in differentiating the program from others already in the marketplace are identified. Likely marketing channels are identified, as are key messages that would be used to communicate the value of the program to potential students.

Financial Pro Forma

Because these programs assume net new audiences, they are also expected to be self-supporting, that is, they fully identify and cover all expenses without relying on a campus subsidy. If a market assessment suggests that a program may be viable, information from the assessment would be used to create a pro forma with projected revenue and expenses. Projecting revenue assumes identifying an appropriate tuition rate. Expense projections should include initial program development and support costs as well as steady state expenses.

Program Development—Resources and Priorities

Ideally, development of a new online program would commence only once it has been determined that there is a market for the UIC program and that the program can generate adequate revenues to cover all of the expenses needed to develop and run it.

Because at present development of online programming is de-centralized, individual colleges and departments determine development timelines and pay for start-up expenses themselves. Administrative needs of the program are incorporated into existing college/department structures, built within the academic unit, or outsourced.

If support services for developing and supporting programs were to be centralized entirely, guidelines for establishing program development priorities would need to be set. In a time of constrained resources, UIC should identify funds for development of e-learning in areas that combine high impact, high quality, and high demand. A seed-fund initiative should operate on the scale of *programs* (not individual courses) to ensure unity and faculty buy-in and return on investment.

Resources for development—“investment capital”-- could either continue to come from the sponsoring academic unit—or be provided by the campus through the School of Continuing Studies. In this latter event, revenues from the program would fully repay the investment expenses and once the initial investment had been repaid, the School would retain a portion of the revenue net of expenses to fund future development.

Marketing and Lead Management

Marketing of a program—both the messaging and the media placements-- should be based on the market assessment and research conducted prior to development and track closely to specific enrollment targets for the program. Marketing efforts should be tracked and results should be used continuously to modify and refine the marketing plan.

An effective marketing plan will generate substantial interest from prospective students. In order to ensure that qualified prospects actually enroll in the program, there must be adequate resources also devoted to staff who respond promptly to inquiries and provide sound and thorough support up to and through the admission process.

Issue 7: Removing external and internal barriers

As an unintended consequence of planning for other objectives, UIC and the U of I have inadvertently created obstacles to development of e-learning. The Task Force has identified four issues for investigation and resolution in order to facilitate online education at UIC:

- Currently the Banner software is configured to support the traditional 16-week semester with two parts-of-term. Is it possible for Banner to support a different academic calendar, more frequent start dates, students from campus and online programs taking the same online course and other flexibilities that would enhance UIC’s ability to offer additional online programming?
- Is it possible to provide consistent pedagogical and other standards and guidelines for blended and online campus courses as well as for fully online programs? Can these standards and guidelines be applied across the campus?
- Is Blackboard the optimal learning environment to support online education at UIC in the future? Can additional capabilities be added to the Blackboard environment to address issues that have been raised or should the

University look in a different direction for its online learning environment in the future?

- What is the optimal financial model for fully online programs at UIC? Currently, there are several different “flavors” ranging from the e-tuition “tax” model to the full-cost-recovery model for the UIC Online programs. Is there a need to determine how the tuition reimbursement might work if campus students take online program courses (and vice versa)? Should technology or other fees be a part of the financial model for online programs or campus students taking online courses?

Appendices

- A. Committee Membership and Staff**
- B. Task Force Charge**
- C. Census of UIC e-Learning Programs & Enrollments**

Appendix A: Committee Membership and Staff

Membership:

Mary Lou Bareither, Clinical Associate Professor, Kinesiology & Nutrition and Chair,
Council on Excellence in Teaching and Learning

Paul Brandt Rauf, Dean, School of Public Health

John Fyfe, Executive Director of Information Technology, College of Business
Administration

Henri Gillet, Interim Dean, Graduate College

Clark Hulse, Associate Chancellor (chair)

Lon Kaufman, Vice Provost for Planning and Programs

Cordelia Maloney, Executive Director, School of Continuing Studies

Astrida Tantillo, Interim Dean, College of Liberal Arts and Sciences

Terri Weaver, Dean, Nursing

Staff:

Laura Sullivan, Senior Program Coordinator, Office of Continuing Education

Jennifer Robinson, Visiting Associate Director of Special Events, Office of
Development

Appendix B: Task Force Charge

The Task Force is charged with developing a coherent, campus-wide strategy for electronically mediated learning.

The Task Force should address e-learning across the spectrum from technologically enhanced traditional classroom experiences to blended learning to distance learning. Similarly, it should address the spectrum of both on-campus and off-campus programs.

UIC and the University of Illinois system have already engaged in extensive planning in these areas in recent years. The charge of this “blue ribbon” group is to build on this foundation, including our Strategic Thinking and Strategic Plan reports, the Senate-approved proposal for the School of Continuing Studies, the Global Campus 2.0 report, and most recently the report of the Administrative Review and Restructuring Task Force on Information Technology. You may identify additional foundational documents in the course of your work. You should also feel empowered to request appropriate assistance and expertise on budget and technology issues, and consult with counterparts at UIUC, UIS, and the UA system as needed.

I request that this group work rapidly to create a strategic plan identifying specific opportunities and necessary next steps that will carry UIC through the next two to three years. This plan should keep teaching and learning at its center, and reflect the reality of the resource constraints in which we are now operating. The plan should:

- propose promising market areas and directions for technology-enhanced, blended, and distance learning;
- propose specific directions for technology-enhanced, blended, and distance learning for on-campus students;
- propose specific directions for blended and distance learning for continuing studies students;
- outline what technology platform, personnel infrastructure, and other resources or resource distribution models would be necessary to facilitate these proposals, relative to the status quo;
- determine whether existing and proposed structures for academic governance of e-learning are adequate and sufficient.

Interim Provost Jerry Bauman

March 1, 2011

Appendix C: Summary of UIC e-Learning Programs & Enrollments FY08 - FY11

FY08 Online Course Enrollment *

Term	Enrollments
Summer 2007	390
Fall 2007	1,673
Spring 2008	1,716
	3,779

FY09 Online Course Enrollment*

Term	Enrollments
Summer 2008	522
Fall 2008	2,023
Spring 2009	2,194
	4,739

FY10 Online Course Enrollment*

Term	Enrollments
Summer 2009	748
Fall 2009	2,307
Spring 2010	2,231
	5,286

FY11 Online Course Enrollment*

Term	Enrollments
Summer 2010	1,138
Fall 2010	3,246
Spring 2011	2,631
	7,015

*Includes enrollments in courses noted as online in Banner.

FY08 Blended Course Enrollment**

	Term	Enrollments	# of Courses	# of Sections
	Summer 2007	0	0	0
	Fall 2007	1,311	10	68
	Spring 2008	1,411	11	56
		2,722		

FY09 Blended Course Enrollment**

	Term	Enrollments	# of Courses	# of Sections
	Summer 2008	197	8	15
	Fall 2008	1,510	20	82
	Spring 2009	1,805	14	65
		3,512		

FY10 Blended Course Enrollment**

	Term	Enrollments	# of Courses	# of Sections
	Summer 2009	456	12	23
	Fall 2009	2,090	14	78
	Spring 2010	1,930	19	66
		4,476		

FY11 Blended Course Enrollment**

	Term	Enrollments	# of Courses	# of Sections
	Summer 2010	433	12	23
	Fall 2010	4,268	38	156
	Spring 2011	2,798	27	93
		7,499		

**Includes enrollments in courses noted as blended in Banner.

FY 08 Overall Credit Online Program Headcount	429
FY 09 Overall Credit Online Program Headcount	524
FY 10 Overall Credit Online Program Headcount	832
FY 11 Overall Credit Online Program Headcount	1,342
FY 08 Non-credit Online Enrollments	12,065
FY 09 Non-credit Online Enrollments	11,573
FY 10 Non-credit Online Enrollments	9,197
FY 11 Non-credit Online Enrollments	Not available