

Award for Innovation in Higher Education

Application

Online Transfer Degree Program

January 9, 2014

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Award for Innovation in Higher Education Assurance

I assure that I have read and support this application for an award. I understand that if this application is chosen for an award, my institution will be required to submit, for approval by the Committee on Awards for Innovation in Higher Education, a report indicting proposed uses of the award funds, and, as the fiscal agent, will be responsible for distributing funds to any other participating entities. I also understand that, if this application is selected for an award, my institution will be required to submit reports to the Director of Finance by January 1, 2018, and by January 1, 2020 evaluating the effectiveness of the changes described in this application.

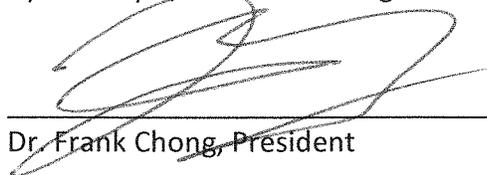
Dr. Frank Chong, President

Date

(see electronic copy of signature)

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Dr. Frank Chong, President

1/9/15

Date

Awards for Innovation in Higher Education

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List of Participants

Santa Rosa Junior College is the only participant in this award application.

Abstract

Online Transfer Degree Completion Program

Over the past five years, Santa Rosa Junior College (SRJC), a two-year, accredited community college located 50 miles north of San Francisco in Northern California, has built an outstanding, innovative, and growing online associate degree transfer program that increases student likelihood to complete an associate degree for transfer leading to a baccalaureate degree. The college has a large online program with over 500 online class sections offered each year and fifteen majors and seventeen certificates offered 51% or more online. Building upon this strength, the college continues to be innovative, particularly in helping our students complete lower division transfer requirements and transfer degrees for California State University (CSU) system and University of California Campuses. Key changes and innovations that SRJC has made in 2014 include:

- 1) Expanded the Weekend College Degree Completion Program to offer more “hybrid” general education classes, classes taught partially face-to-face and partially online. This open access program allows students with work and family obligations to complete their CSU or UC transferable general education pattern by attending only on the weekends.
- 2) Developed and launched nine online Associate Degrees for Transfer, the “degree with a guarantee,” that provide SRJC students highest priority admission to the regional CSU campus, Sonoma State University, as well as guaranteed admission in their field or a related field at a CSU campus.
- 3) Worked to close the “achievement gap” with regard to Hispanic, African American, and older students (over age 24) with regard to lower rates of transfer than White or traditional-aged students with the intent of marshalling further resources to increase student engagement, course completion, degree completion, and therefore transfer.
- 4) Developed online pedagogical training to online faculty in an online format.
- 5) Demonstrated that offering online general education and associate degrees is not only possible and sustainable for a community college, but also creates large cost savings for the State and an individual cost savings for students.

The intent of the college is to build on these past successes in order to pursue the following goals:

- 1) Increase the number of online general education classes so that all students who need these classes will be able to take them.
- 2) Decrease time to completion and by at least one semester (15 units).
- 3) Close the successful course completion gap between Hispanic/African American students White students by one percent per year until the gap is eliminated.
- 4) Provide online faculty with robust professional development in online teaching to increase student success, retention, and persistence, and train faculty to use learning analytics.
- 5) Incorporate cutting edge technologies, including mobile applications, effective multimedia presentation tools, and game-based learning into online classes.

A. CONTEXT (10%)

1. Program Goals

The goals below are included in the Santa Rosa Junior College Strategic Plan (2014-2019), the Academic Affairs Education Plan, and the program planning of appropriate deans. A team consisting of the key leaders for online learning at the college proposed the goals and provided the research. These goals were supported by the Academic Affairs Council and approved by the Vice President of Academic Affairs. The President of the College endorses these goals and assures that they will be carried out if an award is granted. These goals will drive the online transfer degree effort for five years, concurrent with the Strategic Plan. These goals are planned with or without an award, but an award would allow us to accomplish them more quickly and to share best practices with other community colleges.

1. Goal 1: Expand access to online general education courses for all students that need them. By increasing the number of available online general education classes, more students with work and family obligations will be able to take advantage of the flexibility offered in an online course.
2. Goal 2: Increase student completion of Associate Degrees for Transfer and decrease time to completion by at least one semester. The Associate Degree for transfer is the “degree with a guarantee,” that assures the student highest priority admission to the local California State University (CSU) and guaranteed admission to the CSU system in their field, thus increasing seamless baccalaureate completion.
3. Goal 3: Close the “achievement gap,” especially the transfer rates of Hispanic, African American, women, and older students (over age 24) compared with White, male, traditional-aged students. SRJC has a strong commitment to helping these groups that traditionally transfer at lower rates to successfully transfer.
4. Goal 4: Provide online faculty with robust professional development and online learning analytics to increase student engagement in online courses, and thus increase retention and completion.
5. Goal 5: Incorporate cutting edge technologies, including mobile applications, effective multimedia presentation tools, and game-based learning into online classes. These new technologies will increase student engagement and retention in online courses, increasing student likelihood of completion and persistence.

Item 2: Statistical Profile of Students

The Santa Rosa Junior College service area, consisting largely of Sonoma County, has a rapidly changing demographic, and the student population is dramatically shifting. The emerging demographics of Sonoma County show a marked increase in Hispanic students. In 2011, Hispanic student enrollment at Santa Rosa Junior College was 24%; in 2012, it was 28%; in 2014 it was 39%, and by 2023, enrollment is expected to be 46% Hispanic. Currently, the K-12 student population is 42% Hispanic; 22% are in the process of learning English; and 48% are economically disadvantaged. The Hispanic student 6-year completion rates are significantly below that of the general student population. In addition, a large majority (80%) of Hispanic students who enter SRJC must enroll in developmental English classes to reach minimum college-level proficiency, which places them at a distinct disadvantage in all areas of their education. Significantly, SRJC is now designated as a Hispanic Serving Institution, eligible for federal Title V funding and grants. The percentage of White students is declining with 53% in fall 2013. American Indian or Alaskan Native (.8%), Black/African Americans (2.4%), Asian, Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander (4%) student populations remain relatively stable.

This dramatic shift in demographics from a largely White to an increasingly Hispanic student population will have a significant impact on graduation and transfer. Our analysis of data for our student equity data indicates that at Santa Rosa Junior College compared to White students, Hispanic students are:

- 34% less likely to complete a degree
- 9% less likely to complete a certificate
- 32 percent less likely to be transfer prepared
- 45% less likely to actually transfer

A large body of research indicates many significant reasons why Hispanic Students are less likely to transfer or to complete a baccalaureate degree especially students with a low socioeconomic background, the first generation in their family to go to college, and low levels of parental education. Hispanic students are also more likely to drop out of college due to work and family obligations. These factors apply at SRJC as well. The following factors affect Hispanic success at SRJC (fall 2013 data).

- Of the 4,829 Hispanic students enrolled in fall 2013, 77% were “First Generation” college students, thus possibly lacking in family role models of college attainment.
- Hispanic students are more likely to enter SRJC underprepared in English: 78% of Hispanic students enter SRJC below college level in English compared to 66% of all test takers.
- Hispanic students frequently cite work and family obligations as their reason for dropping out of school, and they often need to remain in the local area to complete a baccalaureate degree, which limits their options.

Our data for African American students indicates similar disadvantages. Compared to White students, African American students are:

- 21% less likely to complete a degree

Santa Rosa Junior College

- 3% less likely to complete a certificate
- 15% less likely to be transfer prepared
- 17% less likely to actually transfer

Native American, Alaskan Natives, subgroups of Asian, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander students probably experience many of the disadvantages cited above; however, their percentage at SRJC is small and therefore our data is not statistically significant. Although we focus our narrative largely on Hispanic and African American Students, the ideas expressed herein may also apply to other ethnic groups.

Women constitute 54% of our student population. Our student equity data shows that compared to male students, female students are:

- 52% more likely to complete a degree
- 46% more likely to complete a certificate
- 6% more likely to be transfer prepared, but only
- 2.5% more likely to actually transfer.

Although women show a strong performance at the associate degree level, their transfer rate is lower than expected. One possible reason for this is work and family obligations make it difficult for them to enroll in a traditional baccalaureate degree program. Older students at SRJC (above age 24) have advantages in terms of maturity and course completion, yet they are less likely to be transferred prepared and 60% less likely to transfer than traditional-aged students (18-23). It is possible that work and family obligations may limit their transfer options and prevent them from enrolling in traditional baccalaureate degree programs.

The factors that the College online leaders believe we can influence include:

- 1) Meeting the overall demand for online general education classes by increasing availability.
- 2) Address the needs of ethnic minority, women, and older students with work and family obligations by providing classes and degrees that are not space-bound and time-bound, allowing them to achieve their degrees in ways that work for their busy lives.
- 3) Providing articulation and connections to online baccalaureate programs both state and national that also flexibly meet student needs.
- 4) Increasing the success rates in online courses for ethnic minority and other students by making online learning more engaging, exciting, and culturally responsive.

Item 3: Key Policies, Practices, and Systems

Santa Rosa Junior College was an early adopter of online learning beginning in 1994 with a few faculty members taking the lead in developing classes based on student need and their own interests. In its early days, the program was supported by only one full-time programmer who developed a local online system known as CATE. From its early days with limited offerings the district has grown its online offerings to include over 550 courses each academic year in transfer and career/technical fields of study. SRJC online now serves over 1,200 full-time equivalent students each academic year.

The key policies, practices and systems in place to achieve our goals and lessons that we have learned prior to January 10, 2014 include:

1. **An online program should be faculty driven.** Since its beginning in 1994, SRJC's online program has been driven by visionary faculty members. A handful of faculty working with one programmer developed the first "homegrown" Computer-Assisted Teaching Environment (CATE). The program grew due to the dedication of faculty willing to try new technologies and new ways of thinking about teaching. These faculty, students, staff and administrators formed the Distance Online Committee (DOC), again with much of the leadership provided by faculty. Over time, faculty members developed trainings for each other and met to discuss best practices in teaching. Eventually useful web resources were developed and refined. For a summary of the history of the program, see Appendix B.
2. **Growth in online programs is primarily driven by student demand and needs College support.** Currently SRJC serves about 5,000 to 6500 online students (duplicated headcount) each semester and 2,500 to 2,700 online students each summer. More detailed graphs are shown in Appendix B. The College is meeting the demand in business and computer studies; however, 35-40 students try to enroll in each of our general education classes after they are closed, about 2,500 to 3,000 each semester. A lesson learned in order to provide a high quality, accessible, and effective program, more District resources must be committed and more classes and programs must be developed. Systems must be in place to provide the support that faculty need to provide excellent online teaching. Traditionally, the Dean of Library and Learning Resources supervises the online program. Two years ago, the college hired a 50% Interim Director of Distance Learning position, and this position will increase to full time in spring 2015. The college also supports a 60% ADA Specialist, a position that will soon be increased to 100%. Online learning leaders feel the need to have a full-time Instructional Design Specialist and a Multi-media Specialist to provide support for outstanding course development.
3. **Student retention is a major challenge.** Student retention in online courses all across the state and the nation are consistently below that of traditional face-to-face classes. Two large state studies revealed that online courses are typically 8% below retention rates in face-to face classes. However, SRJC has demonstrated that retention can be improved. In the past ten years, SRJC has improved retention from

10% below to only 4% below face-to-face instruction. Improved technology, greater student comfort with the internet, improved course design, and new pedagogical approaches have all contributed to this improvement.

4. **Student support services must be provided.** Accreditation standards require that students taking courses online should have the same access to student services and other student supports as the traditional face-to-face students. The college was able to demonstrate to the satisfaction of our Accreditation Visiting Team in March 2009 that we met this standard through a combination of telephone, web information, and online individualized services. These include the “ask a counselor” online advising and “ask a librarian” online library services. Most recently, starting in spring 2015, will be access to online tutoring. However, we continue to feel the need to strengthen support services.

5. **ADA compliance is critical.** Although we have no specific data, we are finding that many students with disabilities enroll in online classes. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) as well as California standards for individuals with disabilities require a high degree of **access** for students with disabilities – a higher standard than prevails in face-to-face instruction. All **required** materials in the course must be **accessible**, including text, photos, videos, and links to outside references. If it is impossible to make these materials accessible online, only then may **accommodation** be provided instead. Over the past six years, SRJC has successfully addressed ADA requirements. Our Board Policy on “Accessibility of Online and Web-based Instructional Materials” requires that **all** online courses be accessible, and accommodation must be “built into” the course. The college has just recently completed its first six-year cycle of review, assuring that every online course is accessible. About six years ago, the District hired a 30% ADA online specialist to provide the course review and faculty training necessary to compliance. Last year, this position was increased to 60%. And, in the near future, the college plans to increase the position to 100% so that much of the burden of compliance can be lifted from the shoulders of the faculty and handled by a technician with this specialized skill set.

Item 4: Key Changes to Policies, Practices and Systems Since January 10, 2014

Key Changes related to Goal 1: Access to General Education Courses

In 2014, the College made a commitment to increase access to online general education courses by increasing the number of classes available. Based on experience, we know faculty often require 100 hours of work to create a new online course, and incentives are often needed to encourage course development. In 2014, stipends of \$1,000 were offered to ten instructors to develop hybrid courses, and so far six new “hybrid” courses (courses that combine face-to-face and online components) were created for the Weekend College.

In fall 2014, the college launched a similar initiative and provided a \$2,000 stipend to each faculty member to create up to 20 new online general education courses. So far, eight faculty members have been selected to develop new online course sections. Each faculty member accepting a stipend must participate in at least ten hours of training in the course management system (Moodle), and the online class must pass an ADA compliance review. The goal is to have these new courses available starting fall 2015 and spring 2016. However, more courses are needed to meet the demand. The actual need is 20-30 new general education courses. When these courses are in place, the College expects to meet the demand, allowing 750 to 1,050 additional students per semester to enroll in an online general education course.

Key Changes related to Goal 2: Completion

In 2014, SRJC continued to increase student completion of Associate Degrees for Transfer and decrease time to completion. Since the launch of the concept of the Associate Degree for Transfer in California, SRJC has secured approval for nine Associate Degrees for Transfer that are available at least 51% online. These degrees offer students great flexibility. They can combine online, weekend, and face-to-face courses in any combination in order to complete their degree. These options work very well for any student that has work and family obligations while attending college, including many Hispanic students, women students, and many of our “non-traditional” students aged 24 and above. During 2014, the Weekend College added the first four “hybrid” courses that include both online and include face-to-face instruction on Friday evenings and Saturdays. Students can now choose to complete 3, 6, 9, or 12 units each semester attending only on Friday evenings or Saturdays, allowing maximum freedom to build a

schedule that meets their needs. We anticipate eventually having at least ten hybrid general education classes on the weekends. The College offered \$1,000 stipends for hybrid course development. One lesson we have learned is that it can take up to a year for a faculty member to develop a good hybrid course and that a \$1,000 stipend is not enough of an incentive given the amount of work involved. Future incentives will be higher.

Key Changes related to Goal 3: Closing the Achievement Gap

In 2014, SRJC online leaders did extensive research on how to close the “achievement gap,” especially the gap between the online success rates of Hispanic and African American students compared with White students. Several major new studies were released in 2013. One major study by the Community College Research Center at Columbia (Xu, D. & Jaggars, S, 2013), reported on extensive research of online learning using the databases of the entire states of Virginia and Washington. What researchers discovered when online data was disaggregated were significant achievement gaps between Hispanic and African American Students and White Students. The Public Policy Institute of California in May 2014, then replicated those studies using the California Chancellor’s Office educational databases. The same achievement gaps are apparent in California. A deeper discussion of the implications of these three major studies will be found in Appendix D. We are now much more aware of this issue, but we have not yet had time to address it. Our future plans include specific strategies to help close this achievement gap.

Key Changes related to Goal 4: Faculty Professional Development

During 2014, SRJC took additional steps to provide online faculty with robust professional development to increase student success in online courses. The Director of Distance Education in collaboration with the District Online Committee has for several years provided a comprehensive package of pedagogical trainings for interested online faculty. It became apparent that many of our adjunct (part-time) faculty were unable to participate in the trainings, so those trainings were converted into an online experience so that any faculty member could participate at a distance and at any time.

During 2014, the online leaders also did research into the use of Moodle learning analytics, which could provide instructors with immediate feedback about how students were performing and how engaged students were in the class. Students who were underperforming, or

who suddenly became “absent” from the online environment could quickly be identified and offered a variety of support services. These analytics could help instructors intervene early to prevent students from dropping or failing. The College intends to make faculty more aware of these Moodle features in the future.

Key Changes related to Goal 5: Student Engagement

In 2014, the College did additional research to increase student engagement in online learning, with the goal of improving student retention and success. Research suggests that Hispanic students may particularly need and appreciate personal contact with their instructor, and a hybrid course is one way to provide that contact. For that reason, and others, the college initiated the Weekend College Project to encourage faculty to offer courses in a hybrid format, and to schedule them in such a way to make it possible for students to take 2 courses on alternating weekends. In addition, the college investigated new technologies, mobile devices, and game theory as ways to improve student engagement. We will be working with Qube on engaging and exciting online instructional design. See Appendix C for detailed information and see their letter of support at the end of the application. These ideas have not yet borne fruit, but are being incorporated into our future plans.

Overall. In 2014, the College continued to make strides in online learning, improving our systems and practices. The College made a commitment to hire a full-time Director of Distance Education, which will take place in early spring 2015. Overall, the College is satisfied with our existing policies regarding online learning, distance education, and accessibility of online and web-based instructional materials. Any necessary changes to those policies are generally discussed by the District Online Committee (DOC) and brought forward for discussion at the Academic Senate and the College Council by the Dean of Library and Learning Resources.

Item 5: Vision for Continued Improvement and Innovation

Santa Rosa Junior College envisions becoming the premier community college for online transfer degrees in Northern California, and the first choice of students in the region north of the Bay Area. We envision attracting students to our program, and, as part of the Online Education Initiative (OEI), also serving students at other community colleges as well. Our commitment to this project is very strong, as evidenced in the dedication of our faculty and the commitment to online education found in all levels of strategic planning.

Vision Related to Goal 1: Increase Access to Online General Education Classes

The College will expand access to online general education courses so that every student who needs an online general education class is able to enroll. Currently, every online general education class experiences 35-45 attempts to enroll after close, indicating a significant unmet need. The College plans to increase the number of online general education classes by 20-30, serving an additional 700 to 1,050 students online each semester. To implement this plan, the College will pay stipends to faculty of \$2,000 to develop a course, with the goal of developing 20-30 new courses, an initial investment of \$40,000- \$60,000. This one-time investment will pay off in terms of increased access for students. After online class development, the College will be able to offer the classes for many years sustained primarily by state apportionment for funding. Timeline: So far 8 new instructors have been identified. We expect to identify about 20 more, with course completion occurring in 2015-16.

Vision Related to Goal 2: Increase Degree Completion and Transfer

SRJC plans to increase student completion of Associate Degrees for Transfer and decrease time to completion. SRJC has developed nine Associate Degrees for Transfer that can be completed at least 51% online. We will continue to work to add more major requirement courses online so that entire majors can be completed online. In particular, the College will fill in the gaps in five high volume majors to make them available *entirely* online for students who need that flexibility. Students would also have the choice to complete their transfer major with a combination of online and face-to-face classes that fit into with their busy schedules. Research shows that the typical community college student seeks one or two online classes to fill out his/her class schedule. Thus, if a student were to be able to enroll in one online class each semester over three years, his/her time to completion of a transfer degree could be reduced by one semester. Research shows that students who are able to secure online classes have a greater chance of degree completion (see Appendix D for a summary of research). Timeline: This work will occur over the next three years.

Vision Related to Goal 3: Close the Achievement Gap

Starting in January 2015, the college will work diligently to close the “achievement gap” in online classes of Hispanic and African American compared to White students. In spring, 2015 College will begin recruiting for the very first time, students for the Umoja program, a cohort based first-year experience designed for African American students. In addition, in spring 2015,

the College will begin to implement our Title V Hispanic Serving Institution grant called Meta4, which will provide additional support and a three-year guided general education pathway for cohorts of Hispanic and low-income students taking them all the way to completion of a transfer degree of their choice. The flexibility of having entirely online transfer degrees will increase the likelihood of transfer degree completion for both of these groups that are underrepresented in transfer. This innovative plan is supported by a strong theory and evidence of promise. The program components will feature instructional supports to improve Hispanic and African American student retention in general education courses and success via four completely online degree programs. The program will also focus realistic, self-sustaining strategies that deliver high quality, online education to increase the course completion and transfer success of Hispanic, African American, and older (over age 24) students. See Appendix D for a summary of research in support of the goals and strategies outlined herein.

Vision related to Goal 4: Faculty Professional Development

Provide online faculty with robust professional development to increase student engagement in online courses. Online learning leaders have become increasingly convinced that more pedagogical training could increase student engagement and thus success, particularly for those students most likely to fail or drop online courses, including African American and Hispanic students. Starting in 2015, the college plans to develop and require pedagogical training for all new instructors selected to participate in the development of the new general education classes with a focus on student engagement and student success for Latino/Latina and African American students underrepresented in transfer. Timeline: New pedagogical trainings will be developed in 2014-15 and be offered in 2015-16.

Vision related to Goal 5: Increase Student Engagement

SRJC plans to increase the success and transfer rates of Hispanic, African American, women, and older student (over age 24) by creating and testing a model of student engagement and support that increases effective student contact with teachers and fellow students by incorporating highly interactive technologies with best practices in pedagogy. The program will address the specific needs of the lower transfer groups by focusing on online readiness, more effective student contact, high interactivity with teachers and student colleagues, and more social engagement. The innovative program incorporates components from other successful online programs, such as Rio Salado College in Maricopa District, Arizona, which competes successfully with the University of Phoenix by providing a low cost alternative.

Item 6: Impact on Cost of Bachelor Degree

Santa Rosa Junior College has demonstrated that online degree programs are cost effective for the State, cost saving for students, and sustainable for the College.

Costs to the State

The existing online learning program and the existing Weekend College have already demonstrated that there is no additional cost to the State for online courses or degree programs because all classes are supported with the usual apportionment funding. However, the Chancellor's Office Online Education Initiative will eventually shift some of the costs of online instruction to the Chancellor's Office to provide greater coordination to online learning. The cost for the associate degree level work is the cost of 60 degree applicable units plus whatever remediation the student needs. So, the typical associate degree cost to the State at a community college is \$9,130 to \$13,695. To reach the baccalaureate level, additional costs to the state may occur in the CSU and UC systems.

Costs to SRJC.

The new general education classes and enhanced entirely online degrees will incur some costs to the college. Much of the cost is the initial investment in course development and the payment of stipends, as explained earlier. Another cost is faculty professional development in order to support excellence in online teaching. The college spends about \$100 per year per instructor, so the current cost to provide professional development to our 250 online instructors is still modest, about \$25,000 per year. Of course, more professional development is always desirable.

Costs to Students

At California Community Colleges, the cost per unit is \$46. An associate degree typically consists of 60 units of credit courses, costing \$2,700 in fees. If we add to that ten units of remediation in math and English, the additional cost would be about \$460. Thus, a typical student would be able to complete an associate degree for \$3,160. California fees are the lowest in the nation, and a real bargain for students. The cost savings to students are extremely high when compared to the cost of a private online degree program. For example, a student attending Phoenix University for their first two years of a degree would expect to pay \$37,800 in tuition and fees. **Thus the cost savings to students completing online degrees could be as much as \$34,640.**

Textbooks are another major expense for students, and can easily cost \$100 per class, thus \$2,000 for a degree. However, our plan is to help reduce the cost of textbooks for students by utilizing open learning resources when possible. These online resources are typically free to students and help to reduce the high cost of textbooks. Our future plans also includes helping students to purchase the technology that they need, such as tablets and laptops, with low cost loans or technology scholarships to students who meet the criteria for financial need.

Item 7: Risks or Tradeoffs

Risks to the College

There appears to us a minimal risk to the College of adding another 20 to 30 online general education courses per semester. These courses would be added incrementally. There is really no doubt in our minds that the classes would fill as the unmet demand is strong – over 3,000 students per semester try to get into online general education classes that are already closed. One possible risk is that other sections of the course offered face-to-face would not fill, but evidence indicates that students take online classes in addition to their face-to-face schedule, not instead of face-to-face. So, we consider this risk to be manageable. We will monitor this risk by monitoring the fill rates of online classes compared to face-to-face classes.

There also appears to be a minimal risk to the College of continuing to add online degree transfer programs. Student demand is strong, and we have willing partners in both the public California State University System and in private higher education institutions. In addition, the California Community College System, under the leadership of the Chancellor's Office, has initiated the Online Education Initiative (OEI), the purpose of which is to coordinate the online offerings of many community college to contribute to online degree completion. SRJC is currently involved in certain aspects of the OEI, and intends to fully participate in the OEI initiative, knowing that it will only serve to strengthen efforts that SRJC is already making while benefitting students statewide.

Risks to the Students

Our biggest concern is any possible risk to students. At Santa Rosa Junior College, students drop out or fail online classes at 7.43% higher rate than in face-to-face instruction. Hispanic students drop out or fail at 14.83% higher than face-to-face instruction. African American students drop out or fail at 19.81% higher rate than face-to-face instruction. These are serious achievement gaps in course completion that the College plans to address.

A possible risk would be that with encouragement Hispanic and African American students enroll in classes and that statistically speaking, they have a higher chance of dropping out or failing. Also, we need to assure that non-traditional students (over age 24) and women are able to find suitable online baccalaureate degree programs that meet their needs for transfer. The college plans to address these issues diligently. To summarize some ideas described earlier, these are the interventions and mitigations that we plan to implement:

- 1) **Online Orientation.** An optional online orientation to online learning is already available to students at the Online Learning website: <http://www.santarosa.edu/orientation/>; however online instructors could offer incentives, such as book vouchers, “badges” (online merit badges), and or extra credit points.
- 2) **Online Readiness Assessment.** The College already provides a voluntary online readiness self assessment on the web that all online students are encouraged to take. Instructors could require that students take this self-assessment test.

- 3) **Weekend College “hybrid” courses.** For those students, particularly our Hispanic students, who prefer more personal face-to-face interactions with their instructors, our Weekend College now includes four “hybrid” classes with six more under development.
- 4) **Learning Analytics and Student Engagement.** In 2015, the College plans to make Moodle learning analytics available to instructors who can then monitor student engagement and intervene on a student’s behalf before they drop or fail. Instructors can use our online referral system to direct students to the services they need. The college will also be working with Qube on engaging instructional design.
- 5) **Embedded Librarian.** In the near future, embedded librarian services will be added to online classes to help all online students achieve the research skills they need to be successful. Currently, the college already offers 40 sections of Library Research, a one-unit class which all students are encouraged to take. About 20 online sections of this class are offered every semester.
- 6) **Online Student Services.** The College provides a complete array of student services available by telephone or on the web, such as the “Ask a Librarian” or “Ask a Counselor Service.” Online tutoring will be added in spring 2015.
- 7) **Assistance with Textbooks.** The College is already making an effort to reduce the cost of textbooks to students and use more free online open learning resources to reduce the cost of textbooks. We will ramp up our efforts to find appropriate, low cost resources for students.
- 8) **Assistance with the Securing Technology.** The College plans to make low cost loans and technology scholarships available to students in the near future.
- 9) **Online Baccalaureate Partnerships.** Although women and older students do very well in terms of course completion their transfer rates are below expected. It is possible this is due to their work and family obligations and the fact that traditional CSU and UC programs do not readily accommodate the working adult. The college is committing to forming partnerships with CSU campuses that offer online degrees as well as partnerships with state and national private universities that would allow students to continue their educations to completion of the baccalaureate.

SUSTAINABILITY (35% weight)

8. Culture of Innovation and Adaptability

Leadership

Dr. Frank Chong, now in his third year as President of Santa Rosa Junior College, encourages a culture of innovation and adaptability throughout the district. The President has introduced a new openness and transparency in decision-making and planning as well as support and appreciation for innovation at the college. He has encouraged administrators and faculty to seek out best practices and research to enhance student success. He has hired our first college grant writer to coordinate grant-seeking efforts. In addition, all of the Vice-Presidents have been empowered and encouraged to seek out and implement innovation in their own areas of supervision.

Institutional Commitment

This new spirit of innovation and dedication to planning for student access, retention, and success pervades the College's new Strategic Plan, which launched in fall 2014. The new vision statement says, "SRJC passionately cultivates learning through the creative, intellectual, physical, social, emotional, aesthetic, and ethical development of our diverse community." The new mission statement specifically calls out a focus on preparing students for transfer. And the new values statements embrace excellence and innovative instruction and student services.

The Online Degree Transfer Program is fully endorsed by the President of SRJC, the Vice President for Academic Affairs, the Dean for Library and Learning Resources, the Dean for Liberal Arts and Sciences, and the Interim Director of Distance education. In addition, all of the deans whose areas of supervision include general education classes support the program and encourage faculty to consider online teaching. The project goals align with the strategic objectives and have been incorporated into appropriate vice-president and dean planning documents. To assure valid and comprehensive evaluation of all activities, the Office of Institutional Research and the Evaluator will provide appropriate research to document effectiveness.

To ensure program success, the Dean of Library and Learning Resources will supervise the overall program and be responsible for results. In addition, the well-established District Online Committee, which consists of faculty, staff and administrators deeply involved with online learning, will monitor and review student achievement and make recommendations based on their expertise. The success of the program will depend heavily on our outstanding team of professionals, including a programmer, an ADA specialist, and the new Director of Distance Education to be hired in early spring. In addition, we plan to add an Instructional Designer and a Web/Multimedia Specialists when resources allow.

However, the greatest asset that we have is our online faculty. We have over 200 faculty trained, committed and participating in online learning. These dedicated individuals have been at the heart of the program since its inception – seeking out training, learning new technologies,

implementing new ideas, and working hard to improve student success. Their expertise and commitment will assure the success of the program.

Partnerships

Sonoma State University (SSU), located a short distance away from Santa Rosa Junior College, has been a partner with the college for over 40 years. About half of our graduates each year, 500 to 600 students, transfer on to SSU. SSU accept all of our transfer degrees for which they have a similar program and all of our new Associate Degrees for Transfer for which they have a similar program. They are also committed to helping our Weekend College students complete a baccalaureate in their weekend extended education program.

Our relationship with Qube to provide consulting regarding instructional design is new, a relationship established our new Dean of Arts and Humanities, Anna Szabados, who has worked with them in the past. Our new relationship with the University of Florida is also the result of this dean, and we have a letter of commitment from them. In addition, SRJC plans to connect with any CSU or UC that develops an online degree program that our students could transfer into.

Examples of Innovative Academic Programs

SRJC has a track record of supporting innovative academic programs, such as:

Summer Repertory Theatre. For over 40 years, SRJC has provided one of the premier pre-professional training programs for Theatre Arts in the nation. In this program, top notch students from all over California learn, rehearse and perform 11 hours a day, six days a week in a professional style repertory program.

Shone Farm. Our college farm, a living laboratory of agriculture, operates a working farm and with a 1,800-tree olive orchard, a vineyard, fruit orchard, vegetable crops, and livestock barns. Recently the Estate Chardonnay, Pinot Noir, and Zinfandel all won awards in the local Harvest Fair. The olive oil is also award winning.

Adelante, Migrant Education. Sonoma County is in the midst of a major wine-growing region, and thus we support every summer a special program for the children of farmworkers.

Hispanic Serving Institution Grant. SRJC was just recently awarded a \$2.5 million grant to improve degree completion for Hispanic and low income students.

Item 9: Engaging Stakeholders

As noted earlier, key online leaders responsible for online learning have been involved in setting goals and supervision of ongoing activities and innovations, and our plans are fully in alignment with the 2014-2019 Strategic Plan.

Online Education Initiative

Longer term, the College is planning to participate in the Online Education Initiative (OEI), which will allow community colleges all over the state to collaborate to offer online degrees. By the time that SRJC is able to participate, we hope to have implemented many innovations regarding increasing student success, particularly for Hispanic and African American students so that we will have a lot to offer to this effort.

Key Partnerships

Sonoma State University. Sonoma State University, located only 10-15 miles away from Santa Rosa Junior College's two campuses, has been a key partner with the College for many years. The majority of our students, between 500-600 per year, transfer to Sonoma State University. Sonoma State University also accepts 40 of our transfer degrees, including our 20 Associate Degrees for Transfer which give SRJC student highest priority for admission to Sonoma State. The Sonoma State School of Extended Education, which supports a Weekend Degree Program in Liberal Studies, has agreed to work with us encourage our Weekend College students to continue in a program that is also scheduled on weekends.

California State Universities. The following CSU campuses offer entirely online degrees. SRJC already has articulation with these schools, but will more actively promote these programs to students who need online degrees. As more public universities develop online degrees, SRJC plans to work closely with them as well.

- Bachelor of Science in Business, Channel Islands
- Bachelor of Arts in Business, CSU Fullerton
- Bachelor of Science in Computer Studies, Monterey Bay
- Bachelor of Science in Liberal Studies and Teaching Credential: CSU Long Beach

Private Colleges

- University of Florida, Digital Worlds Institute, see letter of support for working with SRCJ Interactive Media transfer students
- University of Phoenix, Arizona. Conversations with University of Phoenix representatives indicate their interest in serving transfer students from SRJC.

Qube

- An innovative online instructional design company has agreed do work with us. See their letter of support at the end of this application.

10. Sustainable within Existing Financial Resources

Frequently, online education is touted by lawmakers as a less expensive option for colleges to provide instruction. As explained earlier, additional costs incurred at SRJC to support online instruction include support staff (programmer, director, instructional designer, technical support, and ADA compliance support) and faculty professional development. However, once a course is designed, it generates a cost savings for the college in facilities costs, including classroom space, utilities, custodial services, and building maintenance. Online courses also reduce or eliminate commute costs for faculty members, making it easier to attract and retain qualified part-time instructors.

Sustainability of the proposed model is made possible by the increase in student participation, course completion, and retention. This model is sustainable for community colleges despite the somewhat higher initial delivery costs because increased student retention in individual course and increased student apportionment revenue. Off-setting the cost of course development and ADA support will be the increased student performance, and the availability of education to a population that is challenged to attend a traditional course schedule.

Online Apportionment revenue

Santa Rosa Junior College has already demonstrated that online learning and online degree programs are sustainable. Below is a summary of apportionment revenues generated by the online program.

Year	FTES	Revenue
2010-11	1112	\$5,076,280
2011-12	1256	\$5,733,640
2012-13	1106	\$5,048,890
2013-14	1224	\$5,587,560
2014-15	1254	\$5,724,510

In a typical year, SRJC offers over 500 online classes, serving about 1,200 full-time equivalent students. If the College could close its current 7.43% overall achievement gap between online instruction and face-to-face instruction for all students, it would yield an annual cost savings of \$392,769 to the State.

EVALUATION (15 % Weight)

11. Evaluation of Goals

- Goal 1. Expand access to online general education courses allowing all students who need these courses to take them. Evaluation: Evaluation will be simply to compare the baseline number of general education sections and the baseline number available seats with the goal of reaching 750-1000 additional seats within the next four years (strategic planning time frame). We will also continue to monitor the number of students attempting to enroll after a class closes.
- Goal 2: Increase student completion of Associate Degrees for Transfer and decrease time to completion. The college routinely tracks the number of Associate Degrees for Transfer awarded each year. We would compare the baseline level to future levels. However, we will probably also need to survey students to determine how many students are using online courses to complete transfer degrees.
- Goal 3: Close the “achievement gap,” especially course completion rates in online courses of Hispanic and African American students compared to White students, with the goal of decreasing the gap by 1% each year. Given the existing achievement gap, this is long term goal that will require at least seven to ten years to address. Evaluation: Annually compare the success rates of students from different ethnic backgrounds to the baseline year.
- Goal 4: Provide online faculty with robust professional development to increase student success in online courses. Evaluation: The College will survey online faculty to determine if our professional development program is contributing to greater student success in online classes.
- Goal 5. Increase student engagement through the use of mobile applications, new technologies, and game-based learning exercises. Evaluation: Survey online students regarding their level of engagement and the effectiveness of these tools.

12. Target Outcomes

Please see Appendix H for a description of how the evaluation will be structured. Both qualitative and quantitative evaluation strategies will be employed to perform both formative and summative evaluations of the online degree program. This will allow for robust results that can be used to improve the program in an annual cycle of evaluation, and build towards a robust summative evaluation with ample evidence and documentation to allow other entities to replicate the program and evaluation measures.

1. Target Outcome and Goal: Increase the number of online general education course sections offered by 10% per year.

	2013-14 (baseline)	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19
Target	240	264	290	319	350	385

Data source: Internal SRJC data showing a count of the sections offered per semester, totaled for the academic year

Assumptions in setting targets: These target outcomes are consistent with college plans to increase online offerings

2. Target Outcome and Goal: increase the number of students enrolled in online general education courses by 10% per year.

	2013-14 (baseline)	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19
Target	8,720	9,592	10,551	11,606	12,766	14,043

Data source: Internal SRJC data showing the number of students enrolled at first census per semester, totaled for the academic year (showing total enrollments, not unduplicated annual headcount)

Assumptions in setting targets: The increased enrollment targets are based on the projected increases in sections offered, which will allow for increased enrollment

3. Target Outcome and Goal: Increase the number of Transfer Degrees awarded by 5% per year

	2012-13 (baseline)	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19
Target	722	758	796	835	877	921	967

Data source: Internal SRJC data showing the total annual number of Associate of Arts and Associate of Science degrees for transfer awarded (AA-T and AA-S degrees)

Assumptions in setting targets: The increased awards targets are based on increased sections offered and increased enrollment, which should lead to an increase in awards

4. **Target Outcome and Goal: Increase course completion rates for online students and decrease the achievement gap for African American and Hispanic students by 1% per year**

Baseline data 2013-14

Student Group	Baseline Retention rate of online compared to Face to Face
All Students	-7.4 lower retention in online (drop/failure rate)
Hispanic	-14.8% lower retention in online (drop/failure rate)
African American	-19.8% lower retention in online (drop/failure rate)

Student Group	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18
Hispanic	-13.8%	-12.8%	-11.8%	-10.8%
African American	-18.8%	-17.8%	-16.8%	-15.8%

Data source: Internal SRJC data showing unsuccessful course completion (the drop/failure rate) of students enrolled in online classes. Enrollment is measured at first census and again at end of term after grades are recorded.

Assumptions in setting targets: The strategies employed in improving the online degree program, particularly those focused on student retention, will result in an increase in student achievement

5. **Target Outcome and Goal: Increase the number of professional development activities (in person trainings) offered per year, particularly in the first two years by 10% per year.**

	2013-14 (baseline)	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19
Target	28	31	34	37	41	45

Data source: Internal SRJC data showing number of professional development activities offered and participation rates (factoring in attendance and duration/time)

Assumptions in setting targets: These targets are based on the professional judgment of our online faculty and administrators of what will be needed to implement needed changes

6. **Target Outcome and Goal: Implement multiple new technology tools to engage students in online learning**

There is not a numerical target for this goal other than an increase, as appropriate new technologies will be determined as a part of implementation of program improvements.

7. **Target Outcome and Goal: Increase student engagement in online courses through student usage of new technology tools**

As the new technologies are established, measures of frequency and duration of engagement will be determined, monitored, and measured.

Award for Innovation in Higher Education

Application

Online Transfer Degree Program

Appendices Only

January 9, 2014

Coordinating Institution:
Santa Rosa Junior College, Santa Rosa, California

Contact Person:
Catherine Prince, Dean of Instruction and Strategic Program Development

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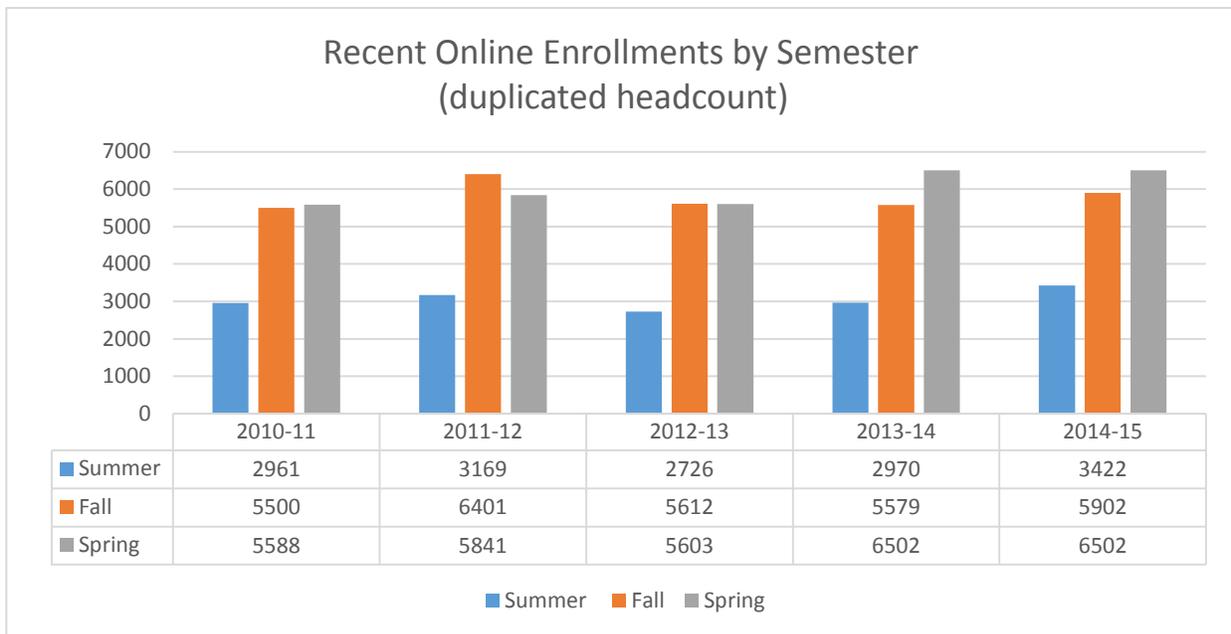
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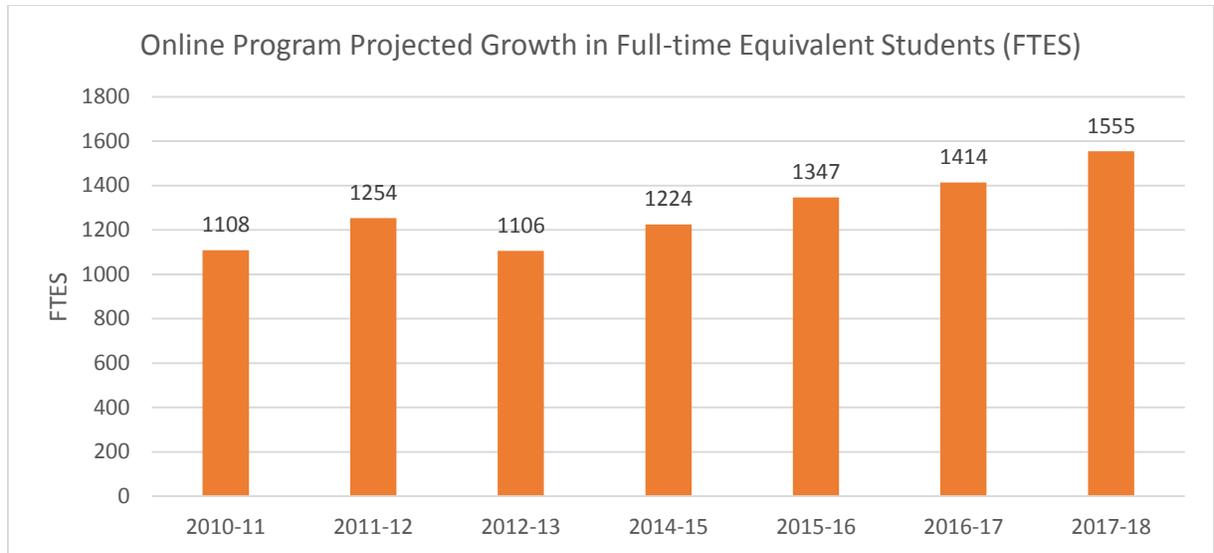
Appendix B

Full-time Equivalent Student (FTES) trend and Projected Growth

SRJC has been consistently serving about 1,200 full-time equivalent online students each year, even during the depths of the recession. That number is expected to rise by 10% per year as the college recovers from the recession and begins to add more online sections. With a projected growth rate of 10% per year, by 2017-18 the college expects to be serving 1,555 full-time equivalent online students each year.



Continued...



Current degrees and certificates offered online

A list of online degrees and certificates is posted on the College website:

<http://online-learning.santarosa.edu/online-degrees-certificates>

Online Associate Degree Transfer Programs (51% or more online)

- Administration of Justice Associate Degree for Transfer
- Business Administration Associate Degree for Transfer
- Digital Media: Interactive Multimedia
- Diversity Studies Associate Degree for Transfer (in progress)
- Communication Studies Associate Degree for Transfer
- Computer Science Associate Degree for Transfer
- Economics Associate Degree for Transfer
- English Associate Degree for Transfer
- Elementary Teacher Education Associate Degree for Transfer (previously called Liberal Studies)
- Global Studies
- Humanities (exploratory major)
- Interactive Media Design Major

- Natural Sciences (exploratory major)
- Political Science Associate Degree for Transfer
- Social and Behavioral Sciences (exploratory major)
- Psychology for Transfer
- Social and Behavioral Science (exploratory major)
- Sociology for Transfer
- Women's and Gender Studies

Career and Technical Certificates and Degrees offered 51% or more online

- Accountant Assistant
- Account Clerk
- Bookkeeper
- Bookkeeper Assistant
- Computer Studies: Adobe Applications Specialist
- Computer Studies: Adobe Certification Training in Illustrator
- Computer Studies: Adobe Certification Training in InDesign
- Computer Studies: Adobe Certification Training in Photoshop
- Computer Studies: Microsoft Office Specialist
- Computer Studies: Web Designer
- Computer Studies: Web Fundamentals
- Computer Studies: Web Programmer
- Computer Studies: Web Project Management
- Digital Media: Interactive Multimedia
- Payroll
- Real Estate
- Real Estate Sales

Existing Staffing and New Positions to Support Online Learning

SRJC currently employs the following staff in support of online learning, with two new positions planned for the future:

- Programmer for CATE and Moodle Content Management Systems, 100% position. Supports programming needs for CATE and Moodle online course management systems.
- Interim Manager of Distance Education, 60% position. New full-time position will be filled in early Spring 2014
- ADA Compliance Specialist, 50% position. Monitors ADA compliance and trains faculty to make online courses compliant.
- (future position): Instructional Designer, full-time
- (future position): Web/ Multimedia developer, full-time

Starting in spring, 2015, the new full-time Manager of Distance Education, reporting to the Dean, Learning Resources and Educational Technology, will be expected to pursue the following initiatives, some of which require additional resources:

- Co-chair the District Online Committee and coordinate goals, targets, and implementation plans for the District;
- Explore and develop new online offerings;
- Organize support for converting online courses from CATE to Moodle;
- Supervise ADA compliance for online courses;
- Provide software training and increase pedagogical training to increase student engagement and success; provide training in effective instructional design;
- Address the need for technical support for students during peak usage (evenings and weekends);
- Increase student retention and success in online courses through ongoing faculty professional development and student support services;
- Assure that student support services for online students are coordinated and easy to locate;
- Improve the Online Learning website, particularly as a marketing tool for outreach;
- Evaluate the need for more faculty support to troubleshoot and assist, especially during non-business hours;

- Monitor ongoing compliance with ACCJC Distance Education standards (for our last accreditation, SRJC was in compliance);
- Provide training (as resources allow) for face-to-face instructors to enhance their online presence; and
- Supervise stipends and support for development of new online courses, particularly in general education and to fill in the gaps in majors at Petaluma.
- Comparison figures for staffing costs only illustrate the comparatively low level of support for online education at SRJC (32-40% of other comparison colleges).

Fast Facts about Online Learning in California

- Over the past ten years, online enrollment in California Community Colleges has increased by one million and constitute, nearly 11% of all enrollments. (Public Policy Institute)
- In California, 20% of students took at least one online class in 2011-12. (Public Policy Institute)
- Research shows that students who take at least some online classes are more likely to earn an associate's degree and/or transfer. (Public Policy Institute of California).
- Online learning increases access, particularly for students with work or family obligations.
- The Online Education Initiative (OEI) will provide \$10 million each year to community colleges to fund online learning, but that is still in the development stage, and SRJC needs to continue to move ahead.

History of Online Learning at Santa Rosa Junior College

Santa Rosa Junior College has been providing online learning for twenty years. Below is a brief history of some milestones in the program.

- **1994-95:** A few faculty early adopters experiment with what the internet has to offer.
- **1996-97:** The Dean of Business and Professional Studies and two faculty secure an Economic Development grant to develop and offer the first online classes. The Computer Assisted Technology in Education (CATE) program was established, and the first

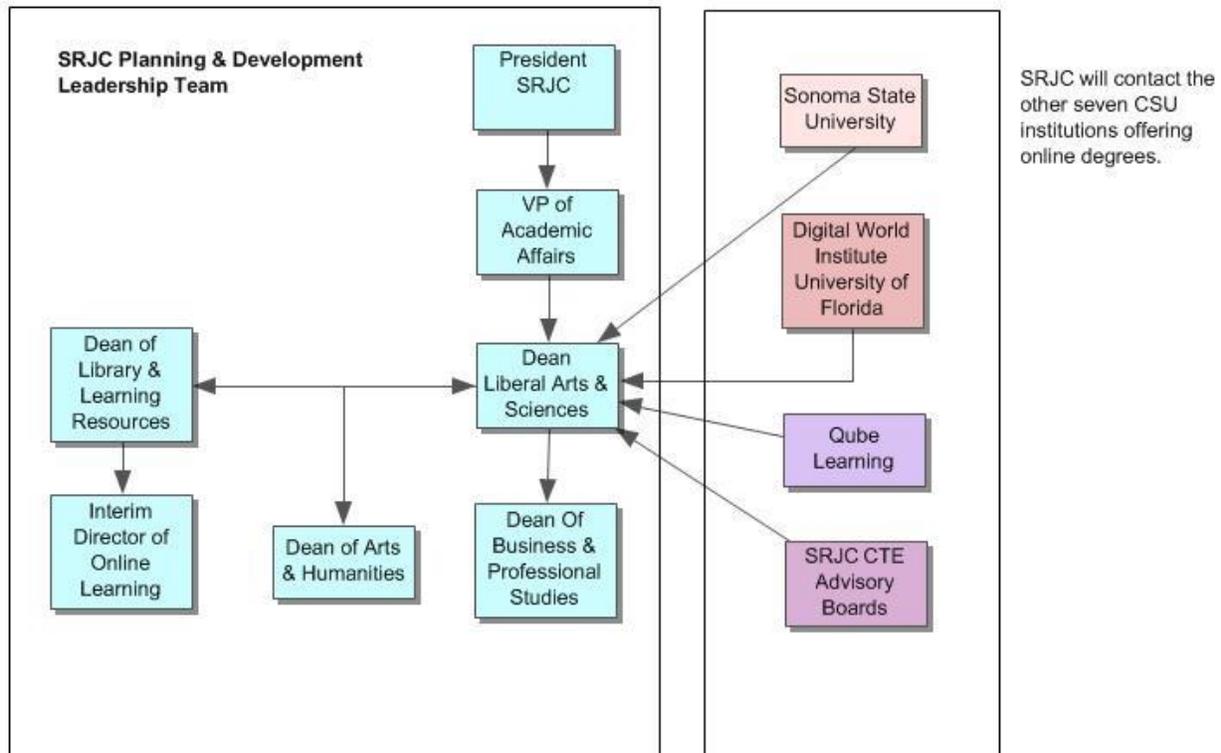
programmer was hired to write the course management system and support faculty classes. SRJC is at the forefront of online course development.

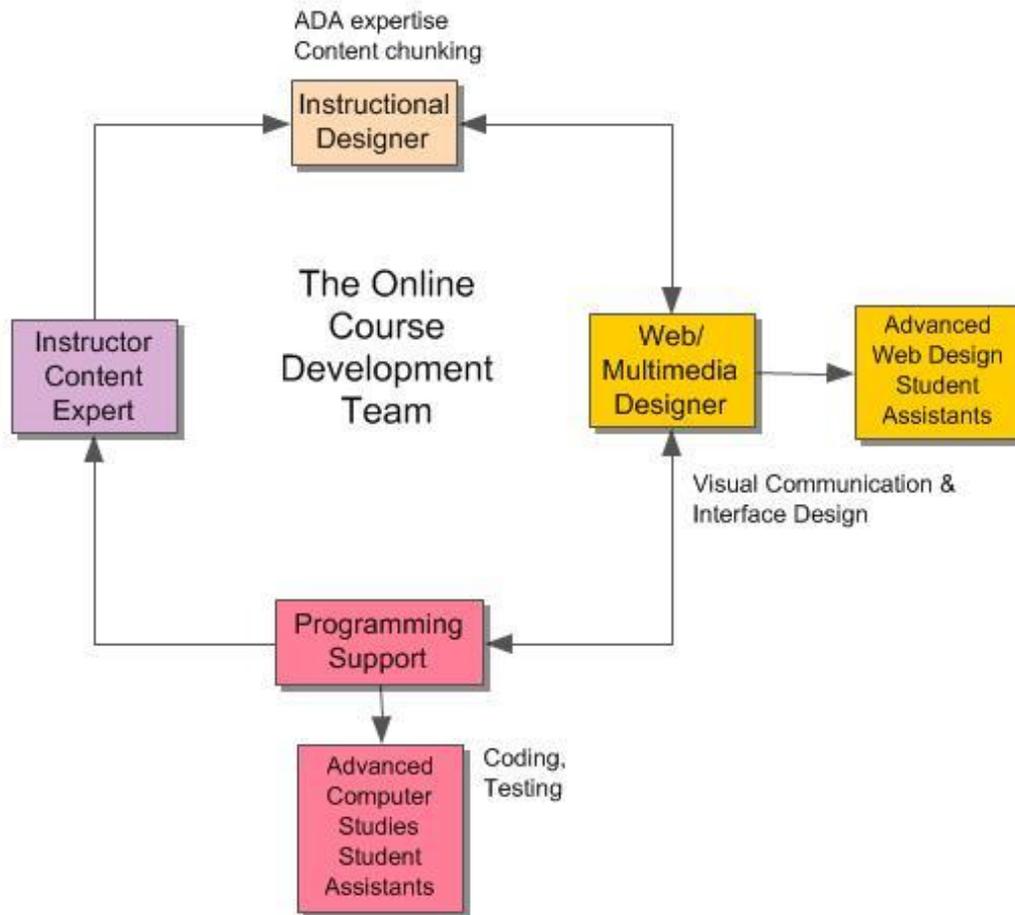
- **1997-98:** The first three online classes are offered. The first hybrid classes (partially online and partially face-to-face) in Humanities and Behavioral Sciences are offered and a home grown course management system called CATE is launched.
- **2001-02:** More than 100 online sections are offered each semester.
- **2013 -14:** More than 500 online sections are offered each year: Online enrollments are increased by introducing “hybrid” large lecture courses that are taught 50% online and 50% face-to-face.
- **2013-14:** SRJC is able to a large number of general education classes (85 each semester) Education, nine transfer majors and fifteen Career and Technical Education (CTE) certificates (11). SRJC offers 556 online sections, over 200 each fall and spring and 125 in summer.
- **2014-15.** The College sets a goal to develop 20-30 more online general education courses. Currently the College offers 85 general education sections per semester online (fall 2014 count), which includes 22 sections of LIR 10, Introduction to Information Literacy. Typically, almost all general education classes close during Priority 1 Registration with 2,500 to 3,000 students attempting to enroll after close, indicating unmet demand.

APPENDIX D: Future Goals and Plans

The diagram below illustrates the envisioned structure of our Online Learning Program. As now, the President and the Vice President of Academic Affairs have the ultimate authority and responsibility. The Dean for Library and Learning Resources supervises the current Interim Dean Director of Online Learning and Distance Education (a full-time Director will be hired in early spring 2015). The Dean of Liberal Arts and Sciences and Dean of Library and Learning resources will maintain the connection with Sonoma State University in terms of transfer and their weekend program in Liberal Studies as well as the connection to the Digital World Institute at the University of Florida. These deans will work closely with the new Director of Online Learning /Distance Education, the Dean of Arts and Humanities, and the Dean of Professional Studies, all of whom supervise large areas of online learning. The Career and Technical Advisory Boards will provide input, particularly with regards to our cutting edge Interactive Digital Media program.

Organizational Structure





Online Learning Course and Program Development Structure

As discussed in the narrative, the online leadership is planning for enhanced support for the online learning program as it continues to expand and to develop more online general education courses and online transfer degree programs. As now, the process of online course and program development begins with the Instructor who provides content expertise. The Instructor will work with an Instructional Designer (new position) to organize the content for the site and to assure ADA compliance. A Web/Multimedia Designer will work with the team to design the interface and to help provide an exciting and engaging look and feel as well as usability. Our advanced Web Design student assistants gain experience by assisting with real-world projects. The programming support continues to be provided by an on-site programmer, who also works with our advanced Computer Studies student assistants to gain experience with real-world projects.

Rationale for Planned Strategies

Recent research predicts that by 2018 (only 3 years from now), 63% of all occupations will require a postsecondary credential and annual job growth for professions requiring an associate's degree will peak at 19%, creating a compelling need for community colleges to increase educational access and success for Hispanic, African American, and non-traditional learners such as students over the age of 24. However, less than 30% of students who enroll full-time in a community college complete an associate's degree within three years, and 2013 saw the lowest percentage of graduations at two-year public colleges in the past 30 years (possibly because of the lack of access during the deep recession). Research shows that students at two-year institutions are 10 to 18 percent more likely to drop out of college than students who attend four-year institutions even after controlling for background, ability, high school grades, and aspirations towards a college degree.

Ethnic minority students face a variety of challenges while attempting to enter the world of higher education that other potential students may not face. These challenges include, but are not limited to, lack of family support, financial difficulty, lack of financial aid, the need to work full-time, lack of information about the college preparation and application process, low scores on traditional college admissions tests, and often an absence of a role model who has attended an institution of higher education. On a national basis, graduation rates for many ethnic minority student groups remain well below those of White students.

Research suggests that Hispanic students are more likely than non-Hispanic students to enroll in community colleges versus four-year institutions, regardless of prior academic performance and achievement. A 2009 study found that "Caucasian students were more likely to attend a community college in order to improve job skills, while Hispanic students were more likely to take advantage of the proximity and cost-effectiveness of a community college." (Beyer, 2009) Due to the demands of the labor market, Hispanic students may opt out of four-year programs in favor of employment, while Hispanic students at two-year institutions are more likely to be part-time students and, again, less likely background, ability, and aspirations, [Hispanic] students at community colleges were 10 to 18 percent more likely to drop out of college during the first two years."(Martinez, 2004)

Hispanic students attending Hispanic Serving Institutions enroll in online learning courses at a lower rate than other students, with a greater percentage of Hispanic students translating into a lower overall rate of online learning use at the institution. Roughly 51% of students at Hispanic Serving Institutions are Hispanic, but they comprise only 40% of undergraduate students enrolled in online learning. (General Accounting Office) Research suggests several factors may discourage enrollment in online courses including students seeking online degree plans rather than online courses, potential barriers of technological infrastructure for students from low-income families, and the high of cost of online courses at many institutions. (Xu, D. & Jaggars, S. 2013)

When they do enroll in online programs, Hispanic students consistently rate among low performers. In fiscal year 2011, 53% of California community college Hispanic students complete credit courses, compared to 63% of white students and 66% of Asian/Pacific Islander students. This suggests that Hispanic students need additional support in online learning, and that expanded recruitment efforts for online courses are needed for all underrepresented populations. Three major studies in Washington, Virginia, and California based on samples of all enrolled credit online students in those states confirm that Hispanic Students withdraw or fail online classes at a rate 15 – 18 percent greater than similar courses taken face-to-face. African American students fare even worse online, with drop or failure in online courses 19% greater than in face-to-face classes. Indications suggest factors contributing to lower success rates of minority students in online courses include a lack of digital literacy, inadequate prior academic preparation, and a sense of social isolation.

Hispanic students are more likely to work full-time compared to other lower division students, with 44 percent of Hispanic students working compared to 39 percent of students overall. Hispanic students are also more likely to withdraw from college due to work, caring for dependents, or financial issues. (General Accounting Office) Thus Hispanic students who might need the flexibility of online courses to support degree completion and transfer are also the most likely to drop out or fail. This is the issue the College plans to address.

A recent large study by the Community College Research Center of almost 500,000 courses taken by over 40,000 students in Washington State revealed that degree-seeking community college students are less likely to complete and perform well in those courses. Students demonstrated a failure or withdrawal rate of 8% greater for online courses than for face-

to-face courses. (Xu, D. & Jaggars, S., 2013) When the data is disaggregated, achievement gaps based on ethnicity, gender, age, and GPA become apparent. Similar achievement gaps exist among SRJC students when the data is disaggregated. Whites, Asians, women, older, and higher GPA students are more successful in online learning. There is a significant achievement gap between these students and Hispanic, African American, males, younger, and students with lower GPAs.

Another major research study by the Public Policy Institution of California using large California Community College databases, found very similar results. Their study, “Online Learning and Student Outcomes in California’s Community Colleges” (2014), showed that all students in online classes experienced a higher percentage of drop or failure than face-to-face instruction by 14.0%. Hispanic students were even more likely to fail or drop out by 15.9%. And African American online students dropped out or failed 17.9% more than those in face-to-face instruction. This disaggregation of data shows serious problems with online learning for these two large ethnic groups.

At Santa Rosa Junior College, students drop out or fail online classes at 7.43% higher rate than in face-to-face instruction. Hispanic students drop out or fail at 14.83% higher than face-to-face instruction. African American students drop out or fail at 19.81% higher rate than face-to-face instruction. These are serious achievement gaps in course completion that the College plans to address.

At SRJC, older students (over age 24) generally perform well in online courses. Chancellor’s Office student equity data shows that many older students perform well in their course work yet often fail to transfer. The College does not yet understand the reason for this, but we will investigate. We are guessing that family and work obligations prevent them from transferring out of the area or completing a bachelor’s degree in the traditional way.

In a review of low-income and underprepared students’ success and retention in online courses at a Virginia community colleges, Shanna Smith Jaggars identified specific interventions targeting this student cohort, including providing students with online learning skills, development of time management, self-directed study skills; enhancement of non-instructional supports integrated into class activities and round-the-clock assistance. Jaggars’ research also suggests the promise of instructional support through improved course design, faculty

development, and continuous reassessments of quality and improvement. Our plan is to incorporate these elements into our planning for the Online Transfer Degree Program.

In his 2009 research at Antelope Valley College, a community college in California, Beyer used surveys and interviews to determine differences in online learning, as well as problems with Hispanic student retention in online learning. While his results showed no significant differences in digital literacy, student engagement, or class performance, results did demonstrate a difference in course design preference between Hispanic and White students, a greater need for clearly defined course objectives and expectations among Hispanic students, and the benefits of a positive social environment on student success for all online learners. Thus, our plan is to provide faculty professional development regarding addressing responsiveness to Hispanic student learning preferences. The College plans to provide faculty professional development leading to greater student success.

Below we summarize the research support for the various components we plan to integrate into our Online Transfer Degree Program, which includes both online and hybrid general education courses and online transfer degree programs.

1. Theory of Transactional Distance. One significant underlying theory for online learning success focuses on what is called “transactional distance,” that is the distance, real or perceived, between the instructor and the student. Our goal is to reduce the gap between instructor and learner through enhanced interaction, thereby increasing student engagement and improving persistence and completion. The Online Transfer Degree Program will empower students to reduce distance by immersing them in an environment rich in support and engaging students proactively at the point of need (rather than waiting for students to fail), resulting in greater student success. By embedding student support elements in the online instruction environment that decrease transactional distance, Online Transfer Degree Program will help SRJC students struggling to transfer achieve greater confidence, sense of self and community, persistence, and autonomy for success in the completion of their academic goals while maintaining the quality, accessibility, and affordability of education.

2. Student preparedness for online classes. The existing research suggests that assessing student online readiness before enrolling in online courses allow college to provide appropriate remediation courses or intensive support services. SRJC currently offers a voluntary self-assessment, but we will incentives for all students to take the self-assessment, perhaps in an

orientation course. Students more comfortable with technology, with better study habits and with higher motivation do better in online classes. Thus, the college will provide incentives for all online students to take an online orientation class that will provide training and proven motivational strategies.

3. Instructional design. Courses designed to optimize the use of technology and give the students more control over the pace and learning yield better results. Thus, a longer-term goal of the college is to hire a professional Instructional Designer to work with faculty to create engaging online class materials.

4. Faculty professional development. Instructors comfortable with teaching online and trained to take advantage of the technology better engage their students and the students achieve. Thus, the SRJC will require instructors developing new online general education and major courses to have training not only on the course management system but also on pedagogical best practices for student success and retention.

5. Learning analytics: Research has also shown that technology can be used to track students and facilitate early intervention to dramatically improve student success. There is an emerging discipline called adaptive learning that combines computer software database technology, statistical modeling, and learning theory to evaluate, with evidence, a student's progress and understanding of course material and then provides feedback to the student and instructor based on previous students' patterns of success to adapt the course to better match the student's learning needs. The more these systems are used, the more data they collect, and the more adept the systems become at providing each student with the right information in the right form at the right moment to maximize student success.

Colleges that collect and use data on the student and instructor's interaction and progress toward student learning objectives, including early intervention, achieve much greater success. The literature on student success with online and hybrid courses consistently points to the need to collect and use data to improve the quality of student learning, instruction, and to give instructors and students regular feedback to help the students achieve their learning objectives. Thus, SRJC plans to subscribe to Moodle learning analytics and to use student engagement data to improve student success, with particular attention paid to Hispanic and African American students.

6. Embedded library research. Embedding librarians into undergraduate education and curriculum lays a framework for a context in which librarians directly aid students on their path toward graduation. Systematically embedding librarians in this way as a means of improving underrepresented student retention is suggested in the literature, and presents a cornerstone of the program's proposed innovation. Thus, SRJC will find incentives to encourage all online transfer degree students to take our one-unit library research course early in their college careers.

Instructors and librarian will be poised to assist students at the point of need rather than after experience of failure to figure things out on their own. Through use of learning analytics, online discussion boards, student time on task, student performance on Moodle "lessons" and other tools, assignments can be monitored and flagged so that course instructors, librarians and counselors will know that interaction is needed. SRJC will equip faculty with tools and techniques to incorporate into their online classes that will help to provide ongoing support throughout the course. This will include features such as the locally developed "Reading List" incorporating Library video and text resources, external Moodle module, forum (discussion board) targeted prompts, linked thematic library guides, Moodle Lessons, linked "Ask a Librarian" communication services, and other resources. The purpose of this intervention is to identify an important area for librarians to positively impact student retention. Since underrepresented community college students generally need additional supports for academic success and retention, they offer librarians a useful entry point to contribute to the academic mission of colleges and universities, and in a measurable way. Embedded librarianship has the potential for libraries and librarians to become more explicitly connected to overall institutional goals and strengthen their positions in the academy more broadly. Improving the academic capacity of undergraduate students and aiding them on their path toward graduation is meaningfully enhanced through the embedding of librarians into the college curriculum.

7. Online Student Services. Compared to traditional campus student support services, online program support services require increased teaching presence, increased student engagement, and more personalized student services. Existing evidence suggests that Hispanic students in online courses would benefit from expanded student engagement, including a vigorous teaching presence and multiple student support services, especially online learning

orientations. While SRJC currently provides a basic level of student services to all online students, we will be looking for ways to enhance those services.

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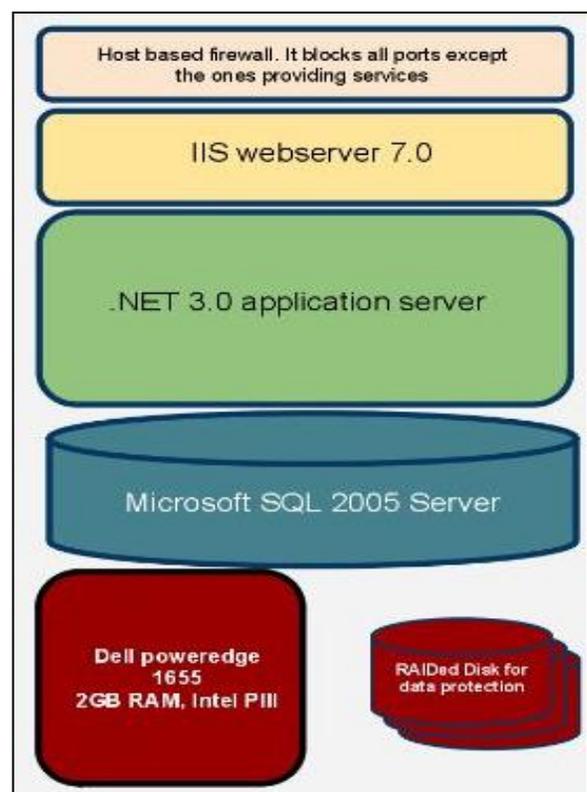
Appendix G: Engaging Stakeholders

SRJC has established a connection with Qube Learning in order to tap into their expertise with regard to using cutting edge instructional design. The following explanation of what they provide is offered by Qube Learning. A letter of support from them is attached at the end of this application.

Qube Learning is a small, entrepreneurial business with expertise in instructional design, online game-based learning and competitions, software development and deployment. Qube Learning's existing professional services and software-as-a-service offerings are used to develop customized corporate communication and training solutions that are delivered as web-based services. The BrainSTEM proposal represents an ideal "fit" with our business and competencies. The company is run by entrepreneur-founder Andy Kimball and software industry and strategy executive Bob Austrian.

Mr. Kimball is a professional consultant, corporate training executive, entrepreneur and expert in the fields of instructional design and activity- and game-based learning. Following a career as a management consultant, sales professional and corporate executive, Mr. Kimball founded Qube Learning working with training games expert Dr. Sivasailam "Thiagi" Thiagarajan. Mr. Kimball built Qube Learning into a 10-person software company with roughly \$3 million in lifetime services revenues, more than 25 clients and a track record of successful software application development and delivery.

BrainSTEM Technical Plan The BrainSTEM platform will run on Microsoft infrastructure, including the web server, the application server and database server layers. Qube was an early adopter of ASP.NET technology and has successfully customized this technology stack (see graphic) based on .NET 3.0 of the framework. For data persistence and stability, BrainSTEM will use Microsoft's SQL server 2005 engine to support 500



concurrent users in a single instance. Most application code will be written in object oriented C# using the .net framework. At the client end, pages will be rendered in HTML along with BrainSTEM games and books written in "actionsript", the language that drives Adobe's Flash components. We will support all versions of Internet Explorer, Safari and Firefox and Adobe Flash including version 10. BrainSTEM also contemplates innovative web services enabled by APIs for seamless integration with social networks and other 3d-party application layers—all developed using the .NET framework. For details regarding our design and development processes, please refer to our detailed Research Plan, below.

THE ONLINE WORLD OF EDUCATION

Distance learning: Sometimes called e-learning, involves pedagogical approaches that incorporate sophisticated digital communication (as well as multimedia and gaming) technologies. Contemporary e-learning technologies today are transforming American higher education. Nearly half of the student population in the U.S. consists of non-traditional students, including working adults who want to complete degree programs, people undergoing professional transition, or simply those looking for personal enrichment. These non-traditional student groups both desire and deserve the convenience and depth that distance learning and online education can provide.

Computer-based training (CBT) has been around for more than three decades, but initially it was little more than text-based distance education. Current technologies, however, afford educators a far greater capability to deliver graphics, audio, video, animation, and interactive multimedia. Moreover, early CBT learners most often engaged individually with their lessons, but emerging Internet-based approaches allow and, in fact, encourage interactive communication and collaboration with other learners.

E-learning, however, is not merely a new delivery mechanism for learning. It also is a fundamentally new way of thinking about learning. As such, it conveys significant benefits, not the least of which being that e-learning can lower educational costs. Providers also can customize content to address different learning needs. In addition, content can be more timely and dependable, and learning can take place 24/7. This technology provides better access to

learning through the Internet, making it possible to organize global learning communities. E-learning solutions also are highly scalable.

There is growing global need for quality online education with increased classroom engagement and student-focused teaching approaches that incorporate multimedia and interactivity (Sonwalkar, 2004). In the near future, say Misha and Sharma (2004), multimedia strategies will have a much stronger impact on how instructors engage students in the educational process. That means increased use of streaming digital video, sound, motion graphics, images and animation in order both to increase the students' interest in the subject and clarify educational concepts.

Schank (2002) asserts that if learning is not engaging to the student, no real learning takes place. He states that “doing” is interesting. “Doing” promotes engagement. Therefore, Web-based e-learning that emphasizes interaction and includes simulations and multimedia can provide the optimal learning environment.

Clark and Mayer (2003) recommend that e-learning courses integrate *both* graphics and words, rather than rely upon text alone. They use the term *graphics* to describe a variety of visual elements, such as technical illustrations, drawings, charts, diagrams, photos, animations, or video. The use of relevant visuals fosters active learning and increases student understanding of the course content. Research shows that images help learners to make mental connections more effectively and provide a deeper learning experience. One of the key terms is *relevant visuals*. In other words, the authors recommend not using images to decorate or embroider but rather to enlighten and explain information.

Another, perhaps more effective online educational resource-sharing example, is the ROI Rubric for Online Instruction created by the California State University at Chico (www.csuchico.edu/celt/roi/). The site attempts systematically to answer the following question: What does a high-quality online distance-learning course actually look like? These researchers identified six critical areas: learner support and resource, online organization and design, instructional design and delivery, assessment and evaluation, innovative teaching with technology, and faculty use of student feedback. Within each of these categories, the site offers

further subdivisions and identifiers of what would create baseline course quality, what would ensure effective course quality, and what features would make it an exemplary quality online course.

In summary, an exemplary online course provides course specific-information and links to campus resources along with opportunities for interaction and communication among students, between students and instructor, and between student and the evolving course content. An exemplary course is well organized and easy to navigate, incorporates diverse technologies, and provides a variety of appropriate learning activities. Such a course further provides ways to assess students' readiness and offers the learners explicit feedback opportunities.

Appendix H: Evaluation

Evaluation of the online degree transfer program will include both formative and summative evaluation strategies, and will incorporate both quantitative and qualitative methods and data analysis. In the near term, baseline information will be measured and tracked to evaluate the implementation of program goals to gauge progress and inform changes. In the long term, program impact will be evaluated (see Appendix H for more details).

In the near and long term, seven outcomes will be measured and monitored: 1) Number of sections offered; 2) Number of students enrolled; 3) Number of degrees awarded; 4) Course completion rates; 5) Number and frequency of professional development activities; 6) Number of new technologies implemented to engage students; and 7) Frequency and duration of student usage of new technologies

Goal 1: Expand access to online general education courses.

Near term measures: Number of sections offered; number of students enrolled

Long term measures: Number of sections offered; number of students enrolled

Goal 2: Increase student completion of Associate Degrees for Transfer and decrease time to completion.

Near term measures: Number of degrees awarded; average time to completion

Long term measures: Number of degrees awarded; average time to completion

Goal 3: Close the “achievement gap.”

Near term measure: Course retention rates by ethnicity

Long term measure: Number of degrees awarded by ethnicity

Goal 4: Increase student success in online courses by providing robust professional development for faculty.

Near term measure: Number and frequency of professional development opportunities

Long term measures: Course retention rates; number of degrees awarded

Goal 5: Increase student engagement in online courses through the use of cutting edge technologies.

Near term measures: Number of new technologies implemented; student usage of new technologies (frequency and duration of engagement)

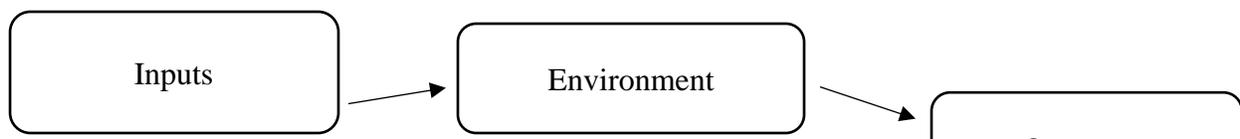
Long term measure: Course retention rates; number of degrees awarded

The evaluation will include both formative and summative aspects. As outlined in Sections 11 and 12, SRJC will measure and monitor near term, long term and targets for outcomes. Near term outcomes are particularly important to inform ongoing program improvements, and long term outcomes will provide a summative evaluation. Various research methods will be utilized, to collect evidence for evaluation, including qualitative and quantitative methods.

Formative evaluation of appropriate aspects of the Online Transfer Degree Program model will provide performance feedback and permit periodic assessment of progress toward achieving intended outcomes. Specifically, surveys, interviews and analysis of quantitative data where available (i.e., analytics embedded in the course management system, successful course completion rates, term-to-term persistence rates) will be used to evaluate the Readiness Program, and the Online Transfer Degree Program online courses.

In addition to ongoing evaluation for program improvement, program goals will be evaluated to determine the summative success of program implementation. But perhaps more importantly, this project will also include a study of the impact of the model on student achievement. That study, which will conform to the rigors of the What Works Clearinghouse Evidence Standards and thus will be replicable and add to a growing body of evidence for effective practices, is further explained below.

The program impact evaluation will compare outcomes for students who had access to the intervention with those who did not but were similar on observable characteristics, a quasi-experimental design, which will produce evidence about the project's effectiveness. Alexander Astin's Input-Environment-Outcome model (Astin, 1993) will be used to conceptualize the research design, to provide an understanding of the causal understanding of the relationship between the practice and outcomes of education in a natural (non-experimental) setting. Thurmond & Popkess-Vawter (2003) establish the efficacy of this conceptual model for assessing the impact of web-based courses.



Astin's I-E-O Model¹

Inputs include observable characteristics at baseline, or student qualities prior to the treatment. The **environment** includes the nature of the educational environment under study (the treatment and non-treatment comparison characteristics). **Outcomes** are the desired outputs of the treatment, the end results. In order to assess the direct impact of the environment on outcomes, inputs must be statistically controlled for.

The central evaluation question of this proposal is this: Can the proposed changes to online instruction and support (i.e., the intervention, or environment) improve student outcomes? Further, will the treatment interact with student input characteristics (ethnicity, gender, and student age) to reduce the achievement gap that exists at Santa Rosa Junior College? Results could be relevant to other community colleges in California.

For the purposes of evaluating this program, Inputs, Environment and Outcomes are defined as follows:

Inputs

- Race/Ethnicity
- Age
- Entering ability level (placement into remedial or collegiate English, Math, and/or English Language Learners)
- Income level (as judged by receipt of a Board of Governors fee waiver)
- Student Status (new, continuing, returning)
- Online course-taking history
- Participation in Online Orientation (readiness class) and other support designed for online degree seekers

Environment/Treatment

Treatment group: enrollment in online general education or major preparation courses
(Including measures for student engagement with instructional and non-instructional support)

¹ Astin, A. W. (1993). *Assessment for excellence: The philosophy and practice of assessment and evaluation in higher education*. Phoenix: The Oryx Press.

Comparison group: enrollment in non-participating general education or major preparation courses

Intermediate outcomes

- Successful course completion in online general education courses
- Term to term persistence

Outcome

- Completion of a transfer degree

Outcomes will be compared for the courses in the “treatment” group to the outcomes for more traditional on-line courses at the college with instructors that are not participating in the program. Inputs will be statistically controlled for if the courses present significant differences.

The evaluation will measure Absolute Effect Sizes (EF) at baseline for the groups in the study, and if they are found to be within the range that requires statistical adjustment (between 0.05 and 0.25) standard deviations), appropriate statistical procedures will be employed to make the adjustments following the What Works Clearinghouse Evidence Standards.

Post-intervention differences in outcomes will be measured at different points in time, including overall and sub-group findings. The sub-group analysis will be based on effect sizes (standardized mean differences) with appropriate tests of statistical significance, following the What Works Clearinghouse Evidence Standards.

All the data collected for this evaluation will come from the college’s internal Student Information System, which follows rigorous protocols for data accuracy as established by the Management Information System of the Chancellor’s Office for California Community Colleges, which implements data integrity checks that enforce a high level of data quality.

Letters of Support Following



Digital Worlds Institute
Office of the Director

PO Box 115800
Gainesville, FL 32611-5800
Phone 352-294-2020
Fax 352-294-2030

January 8, 2015

LETTER of SUPPORT

To Whom it May Concern,

The University of Florida (UF) Digital Worlds Institute is pleased to express our strong support and intent to collaborate with colleagues at the Santa Rosa Junior College (SRJC) in their proposal for online transfer degree completion.

As an interdisciplinary Institute at the State of Florida's pre-eminent research institution, the Digital Worlds Institute's faculty and staff bring significant expertise in areas related to the design and implementation of online systems and interactive media including our Serious and Applied Gaming Environment (SAGE) program. Digital Worlds is situated across four of UF's Colleges (Arts, Education, Engineering, and Communications) with faculty and professional staff accomplished in computer science, online learning, interaction design, serious games, and network-based media technologies. Our current two-year online BA in Digital Arts and Sciences was designed specifically for transfer students, and we continue to pioneer both real-time and traditional "on your own time" online courses with technologies and techniques being developed in our OnLine/OnCampus Research Classrooms.

These capabilities, coupled with the established programs and innovative leadership at SRJC, would effectively support SRJC's proposal to empower California's youth to greater success in higher education. Beginning with the most sought-after majors that are currently fulfilled partially online, we would collaborate in the design and implementation of curriculum that could be delivered **entirely** online. Robust web analytics, game-based learning and evaluation, and new interaction models for distance programs would play important roles in this proposed collaborative development.

We believe that profound results will be achieved in SRJC's proposed program, increasing not only student achievement and engagement, but that of faculty as well.

We look sincerely appreciate the opportunity to collaborate in this innovative proposal and urge your every consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "James C. Oliverio". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of the first and last names being capitalized and prominent.

James C. Oliverio
Executive Director
Professor of Digital Arts & Sciences

The Foundation for The Gator Nation
An Equal Opportunity Institution



January 8, 2015

Santa Rosa Junior College
1501 Mendocino Avenue
Santa Rosa, CA 95401

Dear Grant Award Evaluation Committee Members,

Qube Learning enthusiastically supports the Awards for Innovation in Higher Education grant proposal submitted by Santa Rosa Junior College. In essence, the proposal deals with increasing the levels of innovation in e-learning and offering compelling online content in order to increase student retention and ultimately increase the transfer levels to four year institutions.

Qube Learning, a Northern California company helps clients build high-performing organizational cultures around the globe through consulting, training, and technology innovation. If the project is funded, Qube Learning will serve as an advisor for online instructional methodology training, instructional design and delivery.

SRJC already has an impressive track record of online course and program development. We applaud and support their efforts and looking forward to a continuing, fruitful creative partnership.

Warm regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Andrew Kimball', is written over the typed name 'Andy'.

Andy

Andrew Kimball, CEO
Qube Learning