



# **The University of North Carolina**

**OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT**

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May 2, 2006

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**TO: Members, Committee on Educational Planning, Policies, and Programs**

**FROM: Alan Mabe**

**SUBJECT: Biennial Report on Distance Learning and Future Plans for Distance and Online Learning**

The Biennial Report on Distance Learning is included in your Board book and we plan to present a brief account of that report. We also want to discuss some future step for UNC in online learning including planning a workshop for the Board at the June meeting on online learning.

**REPORT ON EXPANDING ACCESS  
TO HIGHER EDUCATION THROUGH STATE-FUNDED  
DISTANCE EDUCATION PROGRAMS**

**Submitted in response to North Carolina Session Laws 1998, chapter 212,  
section 11.7 of the North Carolina General Assembly  
May 2006**

**Board of Governors  
The University of North Carolina**

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## *Executive Summary*

The 1998 legislation providing enrollment funding for UNC distance education requires submission of a biennial report that addresses the impact of these programs on access to higher education and the cost of these programs compared to on-campus instruction. As with the three preceding biennial reports, this report provides substantial information that documents the growth of UNC distance education programs and their role in meeting the high priority education and economic development needs of the State.

- State funding for UNC off-campus (distance) education degree-credit instruction, first provided in FY 1999, is achieving the intended legislative goal of expanding access to higher education opportunities for North Carolinians who otherwise would be unable to obtain an undergraduate degree, graduate degree, or licensure in a teaching specialty. High quality degree programs are being developed and offered throughout the state in subject areas that are responsive to the workforce and economic development needs of North Carolina; for example, more than a third of all distance education instruction is related to K-12 teacher education courses.
- The unduplicated number of individuals enrolled in UNC distance education programs increased by 377 percent from FY 1999 to FY 2005—from 6,929 individuals to 33,045. Distance education course offerings increased 424 percent from Fall 1998 (the first year distance education enrollment funding was provided) to Fall 2005—from 412 course sections to 2,159.
- UNC constituent institutions offer 237 site-based degree programs in 53 North Carolina counties, which are taught at 28 North Carolina Community College campuses, public school settings, Area Health Education Centers and other health care settings, UNC graduate centers, and North Carolina military bases.
- UNC online degree programs are rapidly increasing, growing from 6 online programs in Spring 2000 to 90 online degree programs in Spring 2006. Online course sections for UNC distance education programs increased from 799 in Fall 2004 to 978 in Fall 2005, a 22.4 percent increase in one year.
- In Fall 2005, students who are 26 and older comprised 80.6 percent of distance education enrollments as compared to only 22.5 percent of regular term (on campus) enrollments. This indicates that UNC distance education programs are reaching non-traditional higher education audiences who otherwise would not have access to these programs.
- UNC-General Administration e-learning grants have supported faculty development, collaborative online courses and degree programs, and development of distance degree programs that are responsive to critical needs of the state. UNC-GA is coordinating a number of initiatives related to online teacher education support, development of articulated 2+2 degree programs with the community colleges, coordination of information resources infrastructure, degree consortia and joint degree programs, outreach to NC military bases, and the Teaching and Learning with Technology Collaborative.

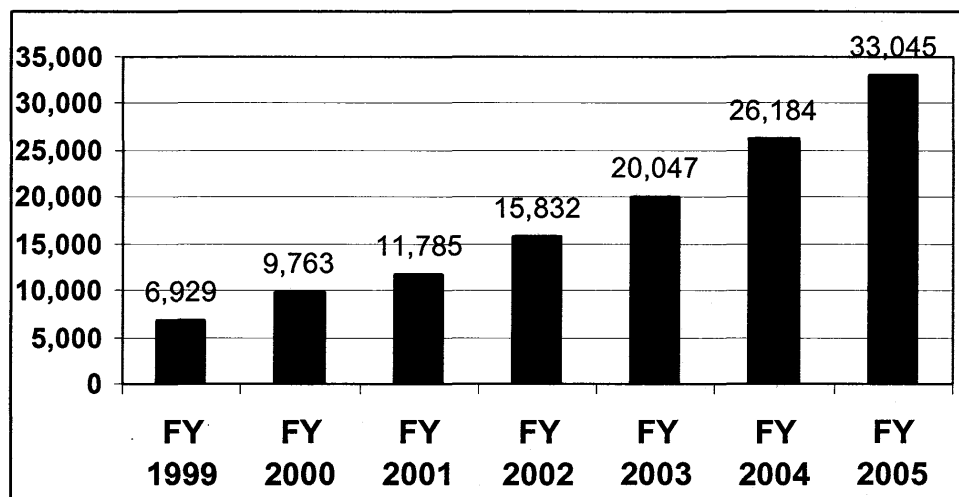
- UNC constituent institutions ensure that they provide the same quality of instruction to distance education students as to on-campus students through a variety of assessment and evaluation procedures. Appendix A of this report provides campus summaries of how each UNC constituent institution approaches such quality assurance.
- A cost analysis of 74 matched pairs of campus and distance courses was conducted (*i.e.*, costs of on- and off-campus versions of the same course were compared). Because of the great interest in online education costs, 53 of the distance courses were online courses. Study results yielded an average total cost for distance education course delivery of \$1,301 per course enrollment. On-campus course delivery costs averaged \$892 per course enrollment. This difference translates to a 30% cost variance. The primary differentiating factor was course development cost. Because programs are in the early stages of adapting many courses for technology-mediated delivery, up-front development cost are often substantial.
- The four biennial costs analyses performed to date all indicate that the greatest direct cost of traditional (“face-to-face”) instruction, whether on- or off-campus, is the instructional salary, primarily related to the delivery and administration of the course. In the current analysis, instructional salary costs accounted for 60 percent of the costs of traditional “face to face” on campus, 52 percent of the costs for distance education “face to face” instruction, and 62 percent of technology-mediated courses (online, and interactive video).
- Course development costs comprise a significant part of the costs measured for those courses delivered via Internet or interactive video. The additional costs of technical expertise (often in the form of instructional technology specialists), training, hardware and software required to adapt courses for technology-mediated delivery add further to course development costs. This represents a new category of costs not present in traditionally-taught courses and not anticipated by our current funding model.

## ***Expanding Access to Higher Education through UNC Distance Education Programs***

### ***Enrollment Growth***

In response to the enrollment funding provided by the General Assembly for UNC distance education programs, the number of students enrolled in these programs has increased steadily every year since this funding was first provided in FY 1999. Unduplicated headcount enrollments over the course of a full year (Fall, Spring, and Summer sessions) increased by more than 377 percent from Fiscal Year 1999 to Fiscal Year 2005—from 6,929 individuals to 33,045 (Figure 1).

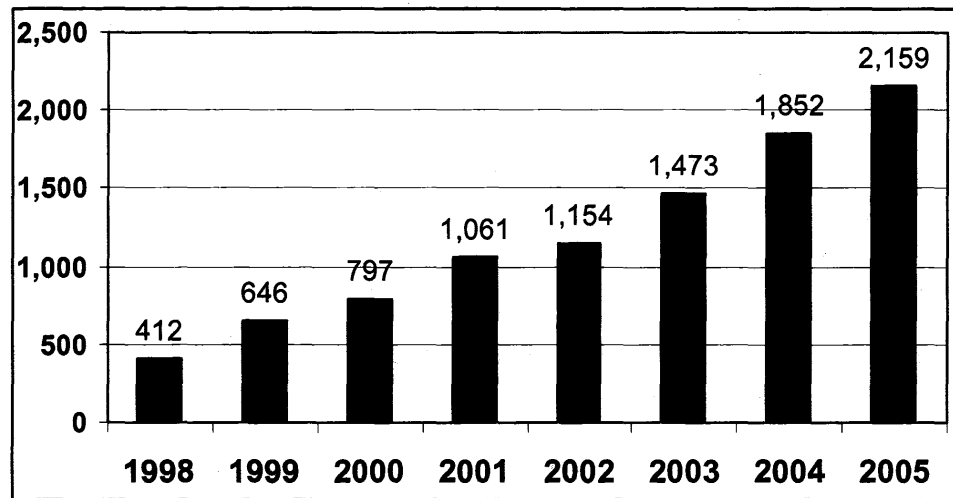
**Figure 1. Growth in Unduplicated Headcount Enrollment in UNC Distance Education Programs, FY 1999 – FY 2005**



[Note: Throughout this report, data generally will be presented for distance education instruction funded by the UNC enrollment funding model because this is the focus of the legislation mandating this report. UNC distance programs also enroll a number of individuals (4,703 in FY 2005) for whom UNC does not receive distance education enrollment funding. Typically these are either non-NC residents receiving distance instruction out of state, or they are students enrolled in specially funded contract or customized distance programs that do not receive enrollment funding.]

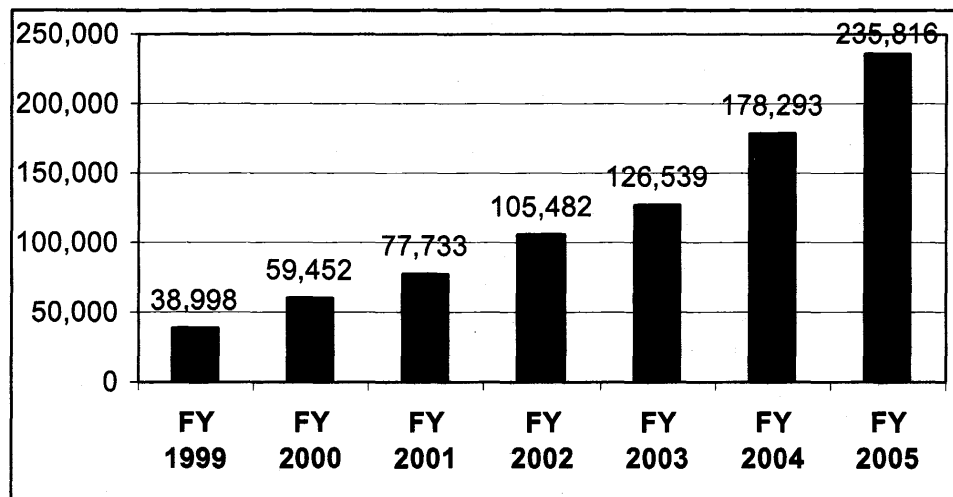
Annual growth in distance education can also be measured by the number of distance courses offered each semester. As Figure 2 illustrates, Fall Semester distance education courses increased from 412 in Fall 1998 to 2,159 in Fall 2005, an increase of 424 percent.

**Figure 2. Growth in Distance Education Course Sections:  
Fall 1998—Fall 2005**



Another indication of growth in UNC distance education activity is the increase in student credit hours (SCHs) taught in each fiscal year. These SCHs increased by 505 percent from FY 1999 to FY 2005, from 38,998 to 235,816 SCHs (Figure 3).

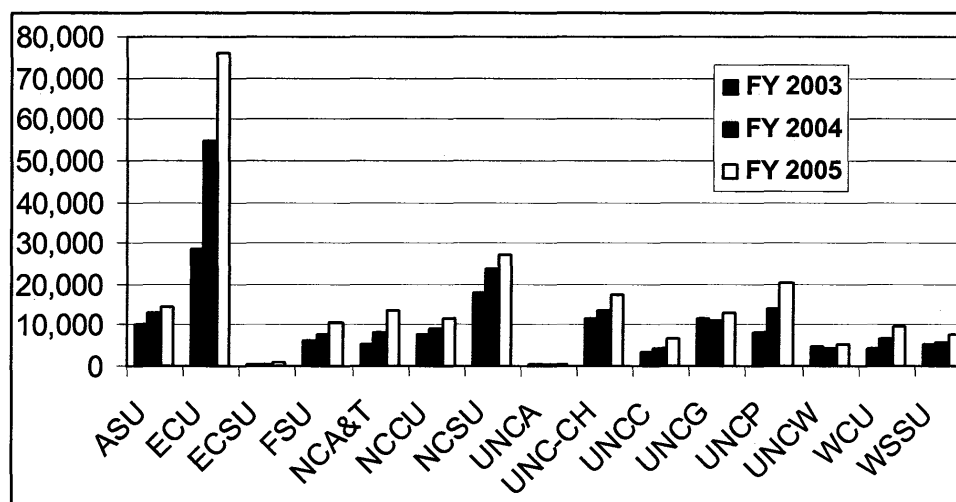
**Figure 3. Total UNC Funding Model Distance Education  
Student Credit Hours: FY 1999—FY 2005**



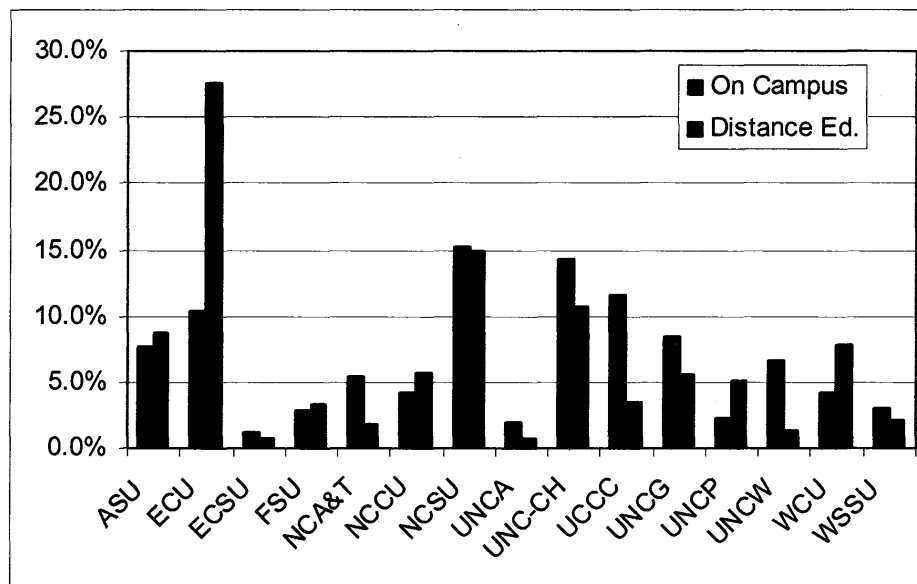
Production of these distance education SCHs varies by UNC constituent institution, with some institutions more active in offering distance education programs than others. SCH production by UNC constituent institution for Fiscal Years 2003 to 2005 is presented in Figure 4. Figure 5 compares the campus share of total UNC SCHs

for on-campus (regular term) and distance education instruction. **Appendix A** of this report provides additional information on activities of each UNC constituent institution including special strategies and initiatives undertaken by the campus in support of its distance education mission.

**Figure 4. Funding Model Distance Education Student Credit Hours (SCHs)  
Produced by UNC Institutions: FY 2003-FY 2005**



**Figure 5. Percentage by Institution of Total UNC On-Campus and  
Distance Education Headcount Enrollments: Fall 2005**



UNC has 327 authorized distance education degree programs in 83 content areas at these levels: 135 baccalaureate, 167 masters, 21 intermediate (post-master's) and 4 doctoral. Of those, 237 programs are site-based, offered at 28 community colleges as



well as at public school locations, military bases, health care settings, regional centers, and graduate centers. Although these programs are site-based (as requested by community colleges, military bases, hospitals, and public school systems), many of them use blended instruction with some online or two-way video components. Figure 6 shows the presence of these programs in counties throughout the state.

**Figure 6. UNC Degree Programs by County Location, Spring 2005**



There are currently 90 authorized online degree programs in the UNC system, up from 6 in 2000. Most of these degrees are unduplicated except for a high need area such as nursing where more than one online program may be needed. [Note: For comparison, University of Phoenix has 53 online degrees offered, mostly concentrated in a few areas such as business; the Kentucky Virtual University lists 29 online degree programs at the baccalaureate level or higher; the University of Texas System Telecampus lists 11 online degrees at the baccalaureate level or higher; the University of Maryland University College (the “virtual” U.Md. campus) lists 42 degrees at the baccalaureate level or higher; and the Penn State World Campus lists 14 degrees at the baccalaureate level or higher. While several of these virtual universities aggressively market their online programs internationally and thus have larger enrollments, none matches the breadth of online degree offerings found in the UNC system.]

UNC off-campus degree programs are increasingly incorporating technological modes of instructional delivery, and almost all use some form of e-mail or web-based sites for information and communication. A majority of courses still conduct some instruction in the traditional or “face to face” manner, with faculty instructors traveling to the instructional site. By mode of delivery, distance education SCHs for Fall 2005 were 71.3% face to face, 28.1% online, 0.5% two-way video, and 0.1% other. Online course sections for UNC distance education programs increased from 799 in Fall 2004 to 978 in Fall 2005, a 22.4 percent increase in one year.

## ***Overview of UNC Distance Education Students***

Analysis of the characteristics of UNC distance education students confirms that many non-traditional higher education students are enrolling in distance education programs. In Fall 2005, students in distance courses had the following characteristics:

**Gender:** Due to work and family obligations, many women are likely to be unable to relocate to a UNC campus. UNC distance education programs are achieving their intended effect of reaching these non-traditional higher education students in their home communities. Women are enrolling in UNC distance education programs at a higher rate than for on-campus programs. Table 1 shows the gender distribution of UNC Fall 2005 enrollments for students only enrolled in on-campus (regular term) courses, students only enrolled in distance education (DE) classes, and students in enrolled in both regular term and distance classes.

**Table 1. Fall 2005 UNC Enrollment by Gender**

	<u>Only Reg. Term</u>	<u>Only in DE</u>	<u>Reg. Term &amp; DE</u>
Female:	56.0 percent	69.1 percent	66.4 percent
Male:	44.0 percent	30.9 percent	33.6 percent

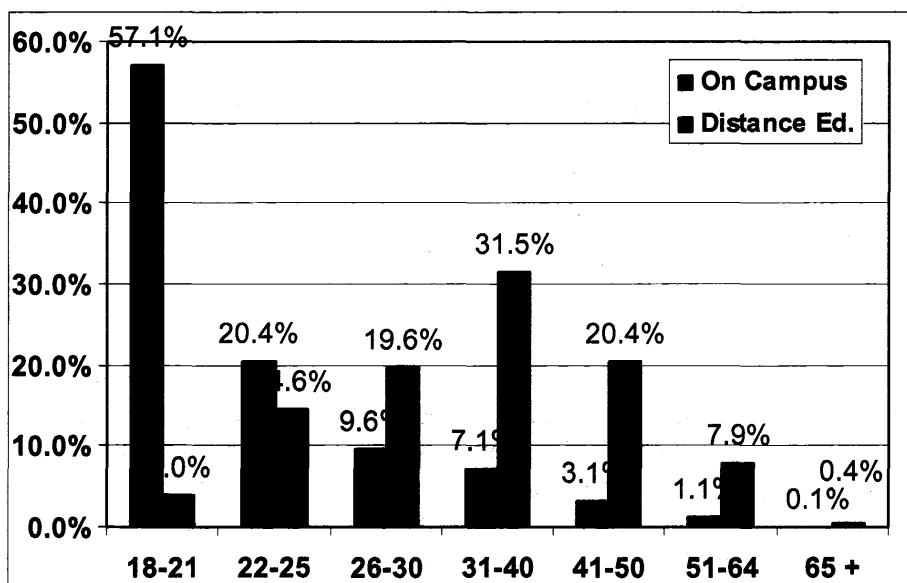
**Race/ethnicity:** It is important for UNC distance education to make higher education opportunities available for all racial and ethnic groups of North Carolina. Table 2 shows the racial and ethnic distribution of Fall 2005 UNC enrollments for students enrolled only in regular term courses, only in distance education courses, and in both regular term and distance courses. For African American students, it is interesting to note that although the percentages of these students taking only distance education courses is lower than the percentages of these students enrolled only in regular term courses, the percentages of these students enrolled *both* in regular term and distance courses is substantially higher than their percentages for only regular term. The percentage of minority students participating only in distance education is also increasing; from 2003 to 2005 the percentage of African-American students increased from 14.5 percent to 17.7 percent.

**Table 2. Fall 2005 UNC Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity**

	<u>Only Reg. Term</u>	<u>Only in DE</u>	<u>Reg. Term &amp; DE</u>
African American	23.0 percent	17.7 percent	34.5 percent
Native American:	1.1 percent	1.1 percent	3.3 percent
Asian:	3.1 percent	1.9 percent	2.2 percent
Hispanic:	2.1 percent	1.7 percent	1.5 percent
White:	66.2 percent	72.3 percent	55.8 percent

**Age:** Another important goal for UNC distance education is to reach older place-bound and working adults in North Carolina. While the majority (56.9 percent) of regular term students are in the traditional college age range of 18-21, Figure 6 illustrates that UNC distance education programs are succeeding in reaching the non-traditional college-age population. Students who are 26 and older account for 80.6 percent of distance education enrollments compared to only 22.5 percent of regular term enrollments. US Census Bureau projections indicate that the older population in North Carolina will grow rapidly over the next decade; thus this trend regarding older distance education students is likely to continue.

**Figure 7. Age Distribution of UNC Students Enrolled in Regular Term and Distance Education Courses, Fall 2005**

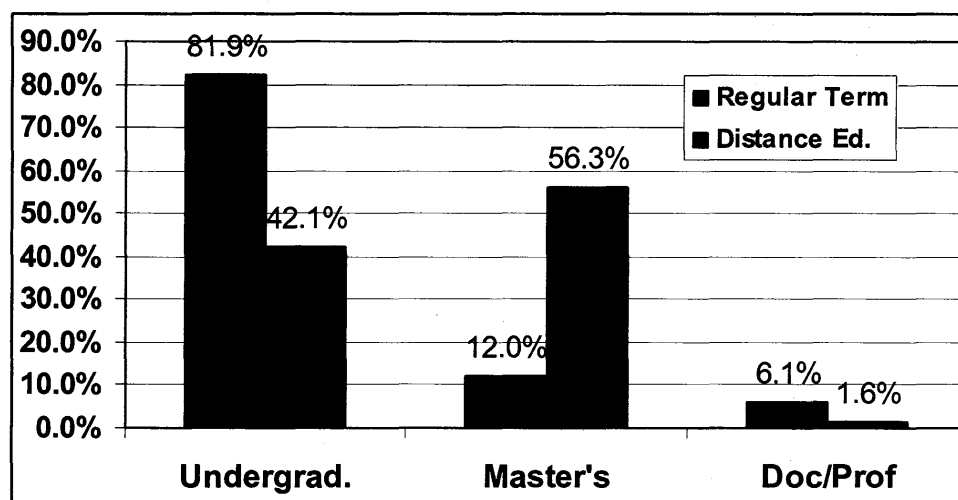


**Residency:** As with regular term (on campus) degree programs, students enrolled in state-funded distance education programs are largely North Carolina residents. In Fall 2005, 88.9 percent of UNC distance education students were North Carolina residents compared to 85.8 percent of the UNC regular term students. (Student credit hours produced by non-North Carolina residents taking UNC courses out-of-state are not counted for state enrollment funding. Non-North Carolina resident instruction taking place inside North Carolina does qualify for enrollment funding, but the non-residents must pay the regular out-of-state tuition that would be charged on campus.)

**Degree level of student:** Because many UNC distance education programs are designed to serve the higher education needs of working adults, many programs are offered at the graduate level for teachers, nurses, and others who wish to pursue advanced degrees without leaving their home community. Thus, as Figure 8 illustrates, a majority of UNC distance education students are enrolled in master's degree programs. (UNC distance programs offer only the final two years of baccalaureate degree programs off campus—one reason for the lower percentage of distance undergraduate students.) UNC General Administration has provided incentive grants to encourage development of a

number of baccalaureate degree programs in critical need areas such as teacher education, health professions, and technology.

**Figure 8. Distribution of UNC Regular Term and Distance Education Students by Program Level, Fall 2005**



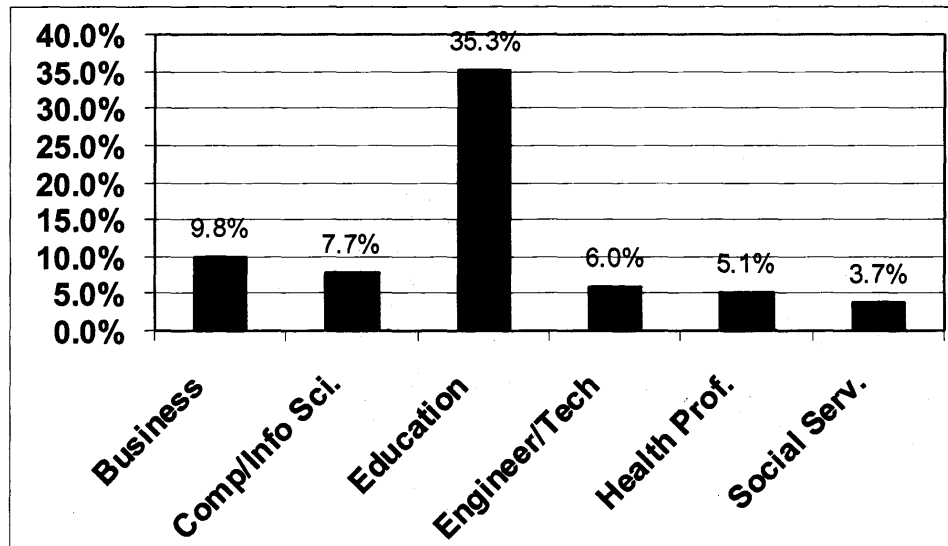
### ***Distance Education Initiatives***

**UNC-GA e-learning grants:** To advance the development of e-learning programs, UNC-GA has provided a number of grants to UNC constituent institutions in recent years. Based on a state-wide needs analysis, three academic areas were selected for emphasis in the development of online degree programs: teacher education, health professions education, and technology. In the four cycles of funding that have occurred so far, funding has been provided for 44 teacher education projects, 32 nursing and other health professions projects, and 24 technology and other projects. Funding guidelines encourage completing development of online degree programs, collaboration with other UNC campuses, and developing support services for online students. Online development projects currently being funded include RN to BSN nursing programs, baccalaureate and licensure teacher education programs, and online information technology and engineering courses. In addition, UNC-GA is a participant with NCCCS in a federal grant through which UNC-GA administers fellowship funds for nurses to earn a Nurse Educator master's degree in return for a commitment to teach in a community college nursing program. Many of these nursing students are enrolled in two online nurse educator programs (ECU and UNCG) for which UNC-GA has provided development funding.

Analysis of distance education student credit hours (SCHs) taught by UNC institutions in FY 2005 indicates that UNC is indeed focusing its distance education efforts on critical need areas of North Carolina. As Figure 9 shows, over two-thirds of SCHs produced were in the critical need areas of teacher education, health and social

services professions education, and the economic development-related areas of technology and business.

**Figure 9. Distribution of UNC Distance Education Student Credit Hours (SCHs) by Area of Critical Need: FY 2005**



**UNC-GA teacher education grants:** In 2001, the General Assembly provided \$2 million to support teacher education programs offered through distance education. This funding, distributed by UNC-GA on a formula based on school productivity, has enabled UNC teacher education programs to develop more online course offerings, strengthen their partnerships with community colleges, enhance technology at off-campus sites, provide professional development for faculty involved in online education, and purchase equipment and materials to support the distance programs.

**UNC/NCCCS 2+2 online initiative:** The General Assembly has provided \$1 million in non-recurring to UNC and \$1 million recurring to NCCCS for development of online courses for 2+2 programs. Initial development focuses on teacher education in the areas of Science Education, Biology Education, Birth-Kindergarten, Elementary Education, Mathematics Education, Middle Grades, and Special Education. UNC institutions are closest to developing online baccalaureate completion programs in Birth-Kindergarten (ECU and UNCP), Elementary Education (ECU and NCA&TSU), and Special Education (ECU), and funding has been provided this year to complete these online programs. The other programs will be developed as campuses are identified and funding is available. UNC/NCCCS committees are also addressing infrastructure needs, faculty development, online registration, student tracking, and a teacher education portal. Several of these areas could serve as prototypes for more comprehensive development that would serve all UNC distance education. *Note:* Although NCCCS received a recurring \$1 million annually for developing online 2+2 programs, the UNC appropriation is only for FY 2006. For all of the online teacher education programs to be developed fully and for additional progress to be made in other areas such as nursing, the UNC appropriation needs to be recurring as well.

***UNC/NCCCS Information Resources Infrastructure:*** The NC Community College System and UNC are collaborating to create and share an IT infrastructure that when completed, will support the 2+2 online programs already articulated and several additional Teacher Preparation programs which are currently under development. This shared infrastructure includes, modules on CFNC for recruiting and applying for 2+2 online programs, interfaces for data exchange between participating colleges and universities, interfaces with the campuses' Student Information Systems, online degree advising, CMS hosting and student and faculty technical support.

***Consortia and joint degree development:*** UNC-GA has actively assisted in the development of course-sharing consortia and joint degree programs in recent years. Consortia have been created to share courses in Speech Language Pathology, German, Gerontology, and Educational Technology, and these courses are typically shared via distance education technology as are joint degree programs in Engineering (NCSU and UNCA, UNCC and WCU), Biomedical Engineering (UNC-CH and NCSU), and Pharmacy (UNC-CH and ECSU).

***UNC outreach to NC military bases:*** Another UNC distance education priority during the two years covered by this report is outreach by UNC-GA and individual UNC institutions to North Carolina's military bases (Fort Bragg, Pope Air Force Base, Camp Lejeune and New River Marine Base, Seymour Johnson Air Force Base, Cherry Point Marine Air and Naval Depot, and the Elizabeth City Coast Guard Station). As a result of the Base Realignment and Closing (BRAC) process of 2005, a substantial increase of military and civilian personnel will occur at Fort Bragg and Camp Lejeune.

The outcome of numerous visits by UNC-GA and UNC institution representatives to NC military bases has been greater communication and collaboration between UNC and the state's military bases than ever before. A number of UNC institution relationships have been established, which will be ongoing as the bases identify educational needs and as North Carolina-based troops return to the state from deployments overseas. Fayetteville State offers a number of degree programs at Fort Bragg that serve the needs of that base and Pope Air Force Base, and in 2005 UNC Pembroke began offering degree programs at Fort Bragg and East Carolina opened an online education office there. UNC-Wilmington has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to serve the educational needs of Camp Lejeune/New River Marine base and offers an increasing number of degree programs there and at nearby Coastal Carolina Community College. Fayetteville State offers an MBA degree program at Seymour Johnson Air Force Base. East Carolina University and NC State University have marketing their online degree programs to the military bases, and ECU is establishing degree programs at Wayne Community College in close proximity to Seymour Johnson AFB. Cherry Point Naval Depot and Marine Air Station has the largest civilian engineer workforce in eastern North Carolina, and NC State has enrolled a number of these engineers in its distance engineering master's programs. The Elizabeth City State University Aviation Science program has a close working relationship with the nearby Coast Guard Station.

In 2005 UNC-GA worked with UNC campuses to establish the UNC Military Education Alliance, which coordinates information and activities serving NC's military bases. Discussions have been held with the NC Community College System about expanding the Alliance to include community colleges.

***UNC Distance Learning Forum:*** UNC-GA helps coordinate meetings several times a year of the UNC Distance Learning Forum, a meeting attended by distance education administrators, faculty, librarians, information technology staff and others interested in distance education issues. For the third year in a row, the 2006 spring meeting of the Distance Learning Forum was held in conjunction with the TLT Collaborative Conference.

***TLT Collaborative Initiatives:*** The Teaching and Learning with Technology Collaborative offers a number of resources to the campuses that can help support their e-learning and distance education activities. A sample of those resources is

- The annual UNC TLT Conference
- Includes a Distance Learning track of specially-selected DL presentations
- Includes many presentations applicable to online and blended courses
- UNC Professional Development Portal
- UNC Compendium of TLT Training Materials
- Ten TLT Interest Groups (communities of practice) on topics including e-Learning Pedagogy, e-Learning Support, TLT Assessment, Instructional Professionals, Distance Education, Web Accessibility, Blackboard, and WebCT
- MERLOT (an online repository of more than 10,000 learning objects)
- Synchronous Learning Management System Project
- Large Enrollment Course Redesign Project (strategic use of IT to redesign large enrollment courses)

### ***Assuring Quality in UNC Distance Education Programs***

UNC constituent institutions are committed to providing the same level of quality instruction to students enrolled in distance education programs as for students in on-campus degree programs. In general, the same evaluation processes for course and instructor quality used on campus are used for distance programs as well. Program assessment is typically done on a course-by-course basis. Some of the approaches to ensuring quality include: student surveys on quality of course and instructor, analysis of student performance and demographic data, surveys of satisfaction with services such as registration and library access, peer evaluation of teaching, program advisory councils, use of evaluation specialists, and feedback from employers and internships. **Appendix A** provides statements on quality assurance activities from each UNC institution

Each UNC distance education program must provide a variety of quality-related information to the Office of the President before the program is authorized for establishment, including: intended outcomes and learning objectives, curriculum and schedule, faculty and support staff, library and learning resources, physical resources,

financial support, and evaluation and assessment. These requirements conform to standards established by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) Commission on Colleges (COC), which includes quality of distance education programs among the criteria that accredited institutions must address.

## ***Cost Tracking and Cost Comparisons***

### ***Framework for Analysis***

The costs analysis was measured for a sample of instruction offered both on- and off-campus during the spring and fall 2005 semesters. The data collection method used the same methodology conducted in the previous reporting requirements.

### ***Methodology***

Course sections were chosen as the unit of analysis, since there are few programs that delivered in their entirety both on- and off-campus, or which conclude within a single year. The appropriateness of this choice is echoed by the methodology proposed by the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems' "Procedures for Calculating the Costs of Alternative Modes of Instructional Delivery (August 1999)," which points out that, though previous cost work disaggregated overall cost data to the level of discipline and course level, allowing the calculation of the cost per student credit hour for teaching a particular course, the necessity of looking at the costs of varying delivery methods which is now needed to create managerially useful information dictates a deviation from that traditional methodology.

In order to satisfy the reporting deadline, the calendar year 2005 was chosen as the measurement period. Courses taught in either spring 2005 or fall 2005 qualified for measurement. The methodology was designed to capture total costs. Where possible, actual costs were used; for allocation of indirect (facilities and administration) costs, a variation of the method used to charge indirect costs on federal contracts and grants was used. The standard formula was adapted to recognize the intent to capture total costs, and was applied on an institutional basis. A sample of 74 "course pairs" was selected to compare an on-campus course to a similar off-campus course. The sample was chosen to include courses with variations in methods of instructional delivery, course instructional level and discipline. The overwhelming majority of the course pairs selected were separate sections of the same course taught during the same time period. This reporting period had a significantly higher number of on-line courses reviewed in comparison to previous reporting periods. Of the 74 distance education courses reviewed, 53 courses were through on-line instruction, 19 courses through distance education "face to face", and the remaining two courses through interactive video.

***Findings:*** In the current costs analysis, the total costs for funding distance education courses per course enrollment (*i.e.*, one student registration in one course) were higher than funding for on-campus students. Study results yielded an average total cost



for distance education course delivery of \$1,301 per course enrollment. On-campus course delivery costs averaged \$892 per course enrollment. This difference translates to a 30% cost variance. The primary differentiating factor was course development cost; because we are in the early stages of adapting many of our courses for technology-mediated delivery, up-front development cost are often substantial. Average costs for instructional delivery for on-campus and distance courses were generally similar (\$32,332 for distance classes and \$24,883 for on-campus classes).

The four biennial costs analyses performed to date all indicate that the greatest direct costs of traditional (“face-to-face”) instruction, whether on- or off-campus, are in the instructional salary costs, primarily related to the delivery and administration of the course. At the present time, the primary faculty member does the largest part of the course development, delivery and administration, although this may change somewhat when non-traditional delivery methods are employed. In the current analysis, instructional salary costs accounted for 60 percent of the costs of traditional “face to face” on campus, 52 percent of the costs for distance education “face to face” instruction, and 62 percent of technology-mediated courses (online, and interactive video).

Course development costs comprise a significant part of the costs measured for those courses delivered in a non-traditional manner (for our purposes, Internet or interactive video). The additional costs of technical expertise (often in the form of instructional technology specialists), training, hardware and software required to adapt courses for technology-mediated delivery add further to course development costs. This represents a new category of costs not present in traditionally-taught courses and not anticipated by our current funding model.

Allocated capital cost of physical facilities appears to be less of a factor than was originally anticipated. For the on-campus courses, a portion of the space used, taking both square footage and space utilization factors into account produced a relatively small charge for virtually all on-site classes. While the costs of facilities for off-site courses taught in the traditional, face-to-face manner were usually higher, they still did not make up a significant portion of the total costs in most cases. It should be noted that no attribution of the capital costs associated with the infrastructure required to enable courses to be taught at a distance has been made.

### ***Conclusion***

As highlighted in the Executive Summary and documented throughout this report, state enrollment funding for UNC off-campus and distance education degree-credit instruction is achieving its intended effect of expanding access to higher education for North Carolina citizens unable to relocate or travel to a UNC campus and reducing the demand on limited on-campus enrollment capacity. Among other benefits, this funding enables distance education students to pay tuition rates at a level comparable to on-campus tuition rates, thus making higher education not only accessible but also affordable for these citizens.

Prior to the 1998 legislation referenced at the beginning of this report, North Carolina was the only state in the 16-state Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) region that did not provide distance education funding for its university system. The enrollment funding has enabled UNC campuses to make crucial investments in faculty training, staff support, and information technology that are needed to offer high-quality instruction in a rapidly evolving and expanding distance education environment.

Instructional quality is paramount in developing these distance education opportunities, and policies and assessment procedures are in place to assure this. Costs of instruction are monitored carefully, and ongoing attention is being given to developing cost-effective programs through efficient use of information technology and collaboration and coordination among UNC campuses. UNC distance education programs are planned with the goal of raising the educational attainment level of North Carolinians and thus improving their economic and social well being. Careful needs assessments are conducted before programs are developed, and programs authorized are those that would be most beneficial for the economic growth and vitality of North Carolina communities. Consultation with other state partners (*e.g.*, the North Carolina Community College System, public school systems, Area Health Education Centers [AHEC], and professional associations) in planning and delivering quality distance education programs is a high priority.

UNC distance education funding is one of several steps taken by the General Assembly and the UNC Board of Governors in recent years to enhance educational access and efficient instructional delivery in the state, and it is likely that other initiatives and developments will continue to advance this commitment in the future. Both off-campus degree program offerings and off-campus enrollments have increased sharply during the first six years of state funding, and there is every indication that this growth will continue if distance education enrollment funding increases proportionately to accommodate this growth.

## **APPENDIX A**

### **Campus Strategies and Quality Assurance Processes**

#### **Appalachian State University**

##### **Strategies:**

The Appalachian Learning Alliance provides classroom sites and support services as well as the opportunity to plan cooperatively. Need assessments are conducted regularly, most recently in spring/summer 2005. The Learning Alliance enables a collaborative examination of the demographics and economic development issues for the region, leading to better educational planning. The arrangement for classroom usage provides opportunities to pool educational funds enabling more classroom technology enhancements. For example, to date classroom usage payments for FY 2006 have resulted in approximately \$680,000 paid to community colleges and to the Graduate Center at WSSU. Institutions and educational centers (such as the Hickory Metro Higher Education Center) are operating at capacity during weekday evenings. Opportunities for expansion are being sought such as the new 40,000-square-foot Faye Broyhill Building at Caldwell Community College, which will open fall 2006 and house the ASU University Center. ASU is exploring collaborative undergraduate offerings with UNCA and graduate degree program offerings at the UNCA Graduate Center.

At present ASU's administration is assessing the scope of off-campus programming in its long-term enrollment plan. Current indications are that there may be a tapering off of the rapid growth in off-campus offerings in future years but not a decline in ASU's commitment to serve students away from its main campus. Preparations are underway for the most notable off-campus programming change—delivery of a full-time undergraduate elementary education program at Caldwell Community College and Technical Institute. Additional full-time daytime programs are being considered to better serve the regional baccalaureate needs of place-bound students.

##### **Quality Assurance:**

A student evaluation of distance learning and library services is conducted annually. Feedback is circulated to the administration and staff for purposes of planning for the upcoming year. Faculty teaching in off-campus programs adhere to department policies regarding administering teaching evaluations. Surveys show that less than 25% of students are interested in an exclusively online experience; therefore ASU has continued to plan primarily for face-to-face program delivery and blended formats of instruction. More experienced tenure-track faculty teach the vast majority of off-campus courses. A major focus this year has been to continue to work toward equipping classrooms at off-campus sites with the same type of technology ASU faculty use on campus. This careful planning with community college and campus technology groups has resulted in a win-win situation for constituents of all institutions involved. As one example, ASU and the WSSU Graduate Center have co-purchased the final teaching podia needed for equipping

“smart” classrooms in the Center. ASU’s disabilities coordinator has teamed with respective community college disabilities coordinators to provide assistance to any self-identified disabled student.

## **East Carolina University**

### Strategies:

Distance education is an integral part of the ECU mission that addressed underserved, place-bound, and non-traditional students. Students average 35 years in age, 72% are female with 2 or more children at home and pursuing a degree primarily for job-related reasons. Two-thirds are from east of I-95 and two-thirds are from community colleges. Focus is on degree programs (not courses) that address high priority state needs: teacher education (48%), health care (14%), and economic development (19%). ECU partners with community colleges, military bases, public school systems, and regional centers such as the Gateway Technology Center in Rocky Mount. Because of very rapid growth in distance education enrollments in recent years, recruiting and hiring nearly 200 faculty based on this enrollment growth has been a challenge this past year. An integrated planning initiative that involved all participants in distance education is currently being completed. Notable successes, such as the Wachovia Partnership East project in Education, exemplify the campus-wide commitment to distance education and outreach.

### Quality Assurance:

Faculty mix in distance programs is same as for on-campus programs, and same surveys, peer evaluation, and assessments of quality and outcomes are used for both distance and campus courses. Professional licensure rates are the same for distance education as for on-campus students, and student satisfaction surveys indicate equal or higher quality of distance education courses. DE students’ first contact with ECU is with a DE counselor. Guidance includes: Is DE for you? What do I need to participate in DE? What is a DE course like? How do I get information about programs and financial aid? How do I apply, talk to an advisor, register, and get started? Students are assigned permanent, professional full-time advisors in their units of study who are sensitive to the issues of being a DE student. Students are asked to complete various online orientation experiences, both university-wide and discipline specific. A comprehensive orientation is being developed for all DE students that will be implemented in fall 2006. The Office of Career Services provides full service to DE students, including resume help, workshops, discussion groups, online portfolio development, and interview opportunities. Students are supported by a full-time DE librarian and circulation librarian. Much of the collection is online and books are delivered with second or third day delivery. DE students are provided with an ID card that allows them access to other UNC libraries. In 2004-05, 1,300 DE students received financial aid. Students have access to an Online Writing Center that provides assistance with assignments in all classes. The ECU Bookstore works through a third party order fulfillment agent to make ordering textbooks online simple and fast. Technology support is available through three channels: Computer-related issues are handled by a live help desk with an 800-number available seven days a week. Help with Blackboard is available by phone and e-mail. Most

colleges provide course-specific technology support. Twice each semester the DE Student Newsletter informs DE students of relevant campus events to help them feel part of the educational community.

## **Elizabeth City State University**

### Strategies:

The Elizabeth City State University Distance Education Virtual College is a collaborative effort involving a cadre of Elizabeth City State University faculty, administrators, and support staff, working to serve as a model for change and growth on campus. The purpose is to extend availability and access to course offerings to prospective students who are isolated from campus due to time and/or geographic location, utilizing existing, new, and emerging technological strategies. Serving as a model for change, the ECSU Distance Education Virtual College is designed to create a group of faculty members who will deliver e-Learning courses. The ECSU Distance Education Virtual College is a faculty driven effort seeking to positively impact enrollment and student retention at ECSU by being responsive to student needs and offering courses to prospective students that would otherwise not have the opportunity to take college courses due to life circumstances. Elizabeth City State University offers online courses from each of its Schools and is reaching out to the surrounding counties to meet the needs of those students who wish to continue their education. We are offering online and video-conference courses to students who are returning to our school as part of the Transition to Teaching project. These students are working in schools as Lateral Entry teachers and are returning to ECSU to complete their teacher training requirements. It is difficult for them to take traditional courses since they are teaching during the day, therefore the online courses are essential. Currently, we are working with the Teacher Education department to develop all of the Professional Core Courses required for the curriculums of Elementary Education, Middle Grades, and Special Education in an online format. We will be working with faculty to develop ten new online courses this spring. We also have a partnership between our School of Business and Economics and the Albemarle Hospital located in Elizabeth City. Many of their employees are returning to school to complete their Business degrees. Day classes are difficult to attend and many students are opting for the online course offerings. We offer online courses and extension courses to these students. We also offer online and extension courses in Halifax and Roanoke-Chowan Counties through the North Carolina Model Teacher Education Consortium.

### Quality Assurance:

Professional development opportunities are offered to assist our faculty with the design, development and delivery of online courses. Our Distance Education Virtual College office provides a series of three hands-on workshops including an Introduction to Blackboard, Intermediate Blackboard, and Advanced Blackboard sessions. These workshops help to prepare our faculty for the challenges of teaching in the online environment. Faculty are not permitted to utilize Blackboard without first attending our Introduction Training Session. We also offer workshops focusing on instructional design models and online course design, multiple intelligences, and MERLOT (Multimedia

Educational Resources for Learning and Online Teaching). Elizabeth City State University's online courses are taught by instructors who have previous experience and knowledge of the course content and online delivery methods. All online courses are taught by instructors who have taught the course in the traditional face-to-face format prior to offering the course online. We also highly suggest that all instructors offer a web-enhanced version of a course before offering the course as a completely online course. We feel this enables the instructor to be both knowledgeable of the content and the online delivery methods and reduces frustrations encountered otherwise. Academic support is provided to online students by their assigned advisors in their respective degree seeking departments. The Distance Education Virtual College department provides technological support to online and web-enhanced students through the Blackboard Support Website. This site provides information for faculty and students that includes Blackboard basics, frequently asked questions, help and requirements, training, online course offerings, online course orientations, and online forms. In addition, contact information is provided for faculty and student support by email or telephone.

### **Fayetteville State University**

#### Strategies:

Significant to the growth of the university is the establishment of Community College partnerships and the military programs. The Office of Military Affairs and Extended Learning added two coordinators with the responsibility for the development of additional off-campus locations to provide educational opportunities for students at the community colleges in the region. FSU will provide programs and courses at those sites to increase the access for students who otherwise may not be able to complete the baccalaureate degree. The coordinators will also facilitate the development of articulation agreements between academic units on campus and community colleges, which will play a major role in attracting new students to the campus. Important to that growth and development is the introduction of the dual-enrollment agreements established at a number of colleges already.

Fayetteville State University has been active on Ft. Bragg and Pope AFB for over 30 years, and has now become resident on Seymour Johnson AFB. FSU is developing a dual-enrollment program with Fayetteville Technical Community College to allow for maximum transfer of credits into FSU programs. FSU has brought in community college coordinators to provide advising services regarding transfer to FSU. Programs at the Fort Bragg Center provide quality educational opportunities in support of the Fort Bragg goals, reinforce the vocational skill specialties of the soldier, and enhance military effectiveness. An advisory board is being developed, consisting of current faculty teaching at the center to advise the staff on the operation of the unit, and to coordinate with their respective college or school the academic programs offered through the FBC. The board will include representatives from each School/College offering programs at Fort Bragg.

Other proposed strategies: Broaden FSU's relationship with Servicemembers' Opportunities Colleges (SOC) by increasing the number of programs offered. The SOC consists of colleges that offer associate and bachelor's degree programs on or accessible to Army installations worldwide. These colleges have joined together to form networks, through which each college accepts credits from the others. This guarantees that Army students and their adult family members can continue toward completion of their degrees even though the Army may transfer them several times.

Recommend FSU offer through Fort Bragg Center Masters in Business Administration, Elementary Education, Middle Grade Education, School Administration, Social Work, Sociology, and Psychology. Incorporate lunchtime, weekend, and on-line classes into the FB schedules to provide additional options for the students. With the limited classroom space, this will be a mandate from the base, as well as a departmental goal.

Invest in classroom space for the purpose of videoconferencing. This will allow us to expand the course offering without additional instructional expense. Expand our marketing effort of the FB Center. To remain competitive among four-year institutions at FB, we will have to increase radio and newspaper advertisements. Feedback from local media vendors, suggest that more schools are investing in advertising.

#### Quality Assurance:

The Office of Military Affairs and Extended Learning, in cooperation with ITTS, provides extensive training for faculty in online teaching methods and pedagogy. We offer each faculty the opportunity to attend regular workshops that relate directly to their online courses and assist with any off-campus needs they have as well. To make certain our "customers" are satisfied with their learning experiences here at FSU, we also do an assessment of our operations each term. To date we have been able to see from our data that we are doing a good job in serving the needs of the distance education student. Lastly, almost all of our courses are taught by full-time faculty here at FSU. We generally try to have the same individual teach on-campus and online to make absolutely certain we are delivering the high quality expected of FSU.

### **NC A&T State University**

#### Strategies:

The School of Agriculture and Environmental Sciences (SAES) has established a 2+2 Online Studies program in Agricultural Education in partnership with eighteen (18) NC Community Colleges. Additionally, the SAES has established a joint online Master of Science Program in Agricultural Education with the Department of Agricultural and Extension Education at North Carolina State University. These programs have served as models of excellence for other programs as NCA&TSU develops the university's overall distance education course and program portfolio, and reach a wider audience of students at the local, national, and international levels. Several school systems, community colleges, and State agencies have collaborated with the University to offer programs and courses for licensure, graduate studies, or workforce development for the teachers in the system. This has worked very well in the past and will continue to be a focus for the Center for Distance Learning (CDL). To improve access to information regarding

distance learning programs and courses, policies and procedures, and military student issues, major revisions were done to the CDL and eArmyU web sites. The eArmyU program, sponsored by IBM Consulting, Service Members Opportunity Colleges (SOC) program, and educational fairs at installations such as Fort Bragg and Fort Hood continue to bring the University several students from the military. Finally, a number of initiatives are in the formative stages with the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation to offer workshops that target HBCU institutions to increase involvement with asynchronous learning networks.

#### Quality Assurance:

CDL staff members work closely with faculty cohorts to develop new online courses and enhance several existing courses during the academic year. An online course template, online course development reminders, copyright information, and additional online course resources are disseminated by CDL to all faculty developers and enhancers to help improve quality and maintain consistency in all online courses. Additionally, CDL and eLearning Systems provide Blackboard online course development and enhancement shells and professional development activities to further assist faculty members with development. Course developers are required to present online courses that they have developed or enhanced to a review committee, which includes members of CDL and the department chair to ensure that courses are prepared to meet quality standards. Online courses are assessed and evaluated during the course development period. Courses are evaluated on design; video, voice, and data usage; pedagogical approach; technical elements; and credibility. Along with reviewing the course development package and contract, the department chairpersons and deans are also asked to review and approve eLearning courses before they can be offered to students. To enhance quality of services received by distance learning students, CDL revised the confidential student opinion survey, which students complete at the end of the semester. Distance Learning students utilize this online survey tool to provide feedback regarding their experiences with selected University service units. CDL compiles student comments and concerns and distributes reports to department chairpersons, deans, faculty, and all service all units involved. These comments are used to identify specific student needs and concerns and make revisions, where possible, to increase retention in eLearning courses. All distance education students can remotely access the Ferdinand D. Bluford Library's catalog, databases, full-text electronic journals, electronic books, and even receive research assistance. In addition, the Center for Distance Learning staff collaborate with student services to assist students with admission, the registration process, obtaining email addresses, technical support, and any other factors that affect the overall experience for eLearning students. Skills assessment and academic advisement are handled by the department offering the degree program.

### **NC Central University**

#### Strategies:

Distance education programs at NCCU are established and integrated fully within the institution's organizational structures and governed by existing administrative and academic policies and procedures. NCCU assures quality by offering distance learning



programs and courses that are part of the university's course inventory and within its areas of expertise. While University College, as the outreach arm of the university, is responsible for development, management, and operations of the enterprise, the academic quality of its distance learning programs is maintained through oversight by the Academic Planning Council, University Planning Councils and curricular committees of academic departments throughout the stages of planning, approval, development, delivery, and evaluation. Approval for a new distance learning degree program is determined at the University Planning Council and the Academic Planning Council. Once approved, the academic department undertakes the task of assuring that the program is commensurate in quality and consistency with the regular on-campus offerings in terms of curricular content and course requirements. University College sponsors NCCU Distance Education programs and ensures the quality of the programs in terms of student services and requisite technology support for faculty and students. Toward that end, University College has developed a Strategic Plan focusing on recruitment and retention of students, and sustainability of its distance learning enterprise.

#### Quality Assurance:

Recognizing that instructors who teach at a distance must be appropriately oriented and trained in the effective use of technology to ensure a high level of student motivation and quality of instruction, University College maintains a faculty support unit that works in conjunction with the Teaching Learning Center and other faculty support entities on campus to provide training and support in appropriate instructional technology, instructional design, course production, course delivery and online course assessment. Additionally, distance learning faculty are provided with financial incentives in the form of stipends, mini-grants and awards for course development, teaching, development of innovative multimedia course material, and travel to local, state and national conferences. Providing adequate and appropriate support for the students is also integral to quality assurance of NCCU distance learning programs and courses. Toward that end, the University College at NCCU provides regular student orientation sessions for students enrolled in distance learning courses. Moreover, a technical help desk is established to provide 24/7 support for students. Toward the end of each distance learning course, Student Ratings of Instruction (SRI) and Distance Education Customer Service Satisfaction surveys are conducted as part of an ongoing evaluation and quality assurance process. Annually, a survey of students who dropped courses is conducted. The information is shared with faculty /departments and schools and feedback from faculty on student retention strategies is sought at regular distance education faculty meetings or via email.

### **NC State University**

#### Strategies:

NC State's Distance Education and Learning Technology Applications (DELTA) organization was formed in July 2000. This unit combines the synergies and efficiencies of technological support with quality learning opportunities provided through Distance

Education. An important strategic initiative for NC State is student outcomes. These include successful completion of a degree or course of study and empowering graduates for a commitment to lifelong learning along with good citizenship. NC State's Flexible Access program, which offers stand-alone courses in many subject areas, assists in progress toward degrees. It provides schedule flexibility to matriculated students, fulfills prerequisites for those seeking admission to a degree program, and provides core competencies. The Flexible Access program accomplishes other important goals. Courses in social sciences, physical and life sciences, and mathematics contribute toward teacher certification through North Carolina's Regional Alternative Licensing Centers. Its technology formats accommodate different learning styles and serve increasing numbers of students registered with the Disabilities Services Office. Courses are also available to exceptional high school students with limited course options at their high schools and to home schooled students through Academic Enrichment Opportunities. This early interface with a UNC institution can be a conduit for future matriculation into campus-based or DE degree programs. The Flexible Access program also serves as an incubator for new DE programs, giving opportunity for faculty to develop courses and programs in new areas of educational need, and the means to gauge enrollment potential prior to commitment of resources for a DE degree program.

A critical need for North Carolina is teacher training to meet the K-12 educational needs of the state's growing population. NC State's College of Education offers several programs that provide training for teachers and school administrators. One example is NC TEACH @ NC State. This program offers an accelerated plan of study that focuses on teacher success and retention and after just two years of operation shows impressive results in teacher retention rates. An NSF-funded prototype technology-based program for North Carolina and South Carolina community college faculty in the areas of science, technology, education, and mathematics began in fall 2004. The Certificate in STEM Community College Teaching offers a plan of study through courses that impact both online and face-to-face classroom instruction by the implementation of theory and practice-based adult learning environments. Research data indicates successful outcomes for the program, evident in student learning, and additional cohorts are planned for the future.

Another major NCSU initiative is development of the Gateway Technology Center in Rocky Mount in collaboration with ECU. Goals of the Center are to partner with the community to support economic development by offering online courses in a variety of subjects. Two additional key DE strategies are in the areas of assessment and diversity. Distance Education's ability to reach underserved populations across the state and beyond was a primary catalyst for the creation of a DE Assessment and Diversity unit. Its primary mission is to foster awareness and encourage participation in the many educational opportunities available to diverse populations. This new unit provides strategic planning and implementation of outreach activities that engage new communities of learners. Advising, orientation, and mentoring strategies help distance education students feel welcome as part of NC State's community of learning. Assessment activities help gauge our effectiveness in reaching diverse populations and measure how well we meet their educational needs.

### Quality Assurance:

Several enhancements to the DE assessment process help validate its role as part of the overall academic mission of the institution. The university-wide Evaluation of Instruction (UEI) was converted to an online format, and is made available to any department that offers DE courses. This enables faculty who teach DE courses to have their instruction evaluated by criteria used for the reappointment, promotion, and tenure process. The DE student service survey was redesigned and converted to an online format. Survey results provide crucial information for the development of new courses and programs, feedback on content delivery methods, and improvement of services available to students at a distance.

Distance Education undertook a pilot study beginning in fall 2004 to compare learning outcomes between DE and campus-based students. Twenty Internet-based course sections of technical, science, and business professional writing were taught to approximately 400 students each semester, and results were compared to a similar number of campus-based sections and students. Three semesters of online and campus-based comparisons have yielded these results, compiled by the program director, Dr. David Covington:

- Student preference for online courses consistently exceeds supply: *"These sections are always full . . . we turn a number of students away, simply because we can't offer enough sections to meet the demand for our professional writing courses."*
- Progress toward degrees: *"A number of students have commented on the value of the online sections; they can make progress toward their degrees without having so many scheduling problems."*
- Student outcomes: *"Student evaluations of the online sections have been consistent with student evaluations of classroom sections."*
- Student success rates: *"Student grades in these courses are consistent with student grades in classroom sections. As the teachers have grown more adept at online teaching, they have learned how to make assignments that challenge students to do their best work."*

An unanticipated outcome of this pilot was the transformation in faculty attitudes toward online instruction. Many of the professional writing faculty had little or no experience with Internet-based technologies and instruction. They were initially reluctant to take part in the pilot program due to their lack of experience in the online environment and their concern that DE learning was not equivalent to face-to-face campus instruction. A comprehensive training program for faculty was implemented, including group workshops and peer to peer mentoring. As they gained familiarity with the online environment the faculty created a web site as a common resource for their Internet courses, consisting of templates, policies, shared course assignments, samples of student work, and other course materials. The program director cites these outcomes:

- Confidence in teaching and learning outcomes: *"The teachers in the program have learned that they can teach successfully online, that their students can learn successfully online."*
- Benefits of schedule flexibility: *"The program has also benefited from the flexibility that comes with online teaching. Over the past two years several teachers have had illnesses . . . we have been able to cover the online classes of these teachers with*

*relative ease, simply because time and location constraints haven't limited our ability to fill in for the affected teachers."*

- Training and administrative support: *"Because of this support, we have been able to bring these faculty members together as a team."*
- Enthusiastic participation: *"Two years later almost half of these teachers teach ALL of their classes online, with the rest teaching at least one DE section. Instead of having to encourage teachers to take DE sections, I have to ration them."*

## **UNC Asheville**

### Strategies:

The Great Smokies Writing Program has drawn writers and poets from all backgrounds and educational levels to participate in opportunities to hone their craft. Since 1999, this department has enrolled over 1200 writers and poets in the program. In addition to providing a learning community where they can write, critique and revise their work, the program offers opportunities for preparing works for publication.

Over 100 courses have been offered in the three regional correctional facilities served by UNCA faculty since the Correctional Education program's inception in 1998. Faculty from every discipline have been engaged in offering face-to-face instruction to youth and adults in Western, Foothills and Avery Mitchell Correctional institutions. Supported by a grant through the NC Department of Corrections and working collaboratively with the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, the program has enjoyed much success. The program offers incarcerated students exposure to a liberal arts education and the opportunity to earn college credits toward a college degree upon release.

Other initiatives include a collaborative effort with Mayland Community College and Murphy High School's Cyber Campus to bring lateral entry teachers the opportunity to complete courses leading to a teaching certification. Efforts are underway to collaborate with AB Technical Community College and Blue Ridge CC as well. UNCA was one of the original architects of the Foreign Language Consortium as a way to expand the depth and breadth of courses designed for German majors on each of four UNC campuses. This model has been adopted by other UNC institutions with limited majors where a critical mass of students is needed for an enhanced pedagogical experience. UNCA's joint engineering programs with NC State broaden the base of educational opportunities to students in Western North Carolina and seek to integrate the engineering sciences within a liberal arts environment.

### Quality Assurance:

UNCA offers face-to-face instruction through on-site learning and through teleconferencing facilities. Online instruction is incorporated to the degree that it serves as enrichment to the real-time instruction that characterizes UNCA's distance opportunities. Pure online courses are not reflective of the liberal arts mission and have been offered infrequently by this institution. Only UNCA full and part-time faculty are employed to teach in the distance learning program. Procedures are in place to ensure that each distance course is reviewed and approved by the department chair and the discipline-appropriate Associate Vice Chancellor. Administrative support for those

teaching extension courses is available through the Extension director. Upon completion, each course is evaluated using the UNCA Institutional Research's evaluation forms. Once reviewed, these evaluations serve as the basis for decisions about future course offerings and instructors. Distance learners are given access to Campus pipeline, a personalized web interface that is integrated with UNC Asheville's web services and products. Library Services are available for distance learners providing a "personal librarian", "ask-a-librarian" reference service, the library catalog and remote access to online resources.

## **UNC Chapel Hill**

### Strategies:

The William and Ida Friday Center for Continuing Education offers a wide range of individual courses through Carolina Courses Online and Self Paced Courses Online. Enrollment in these programs in 2004-2005 totaled over 5,000 students, permitting learners to reach individual goals for progress toward academic degrees.

While traditional North Carolina job markets have been declining, the field of health care is the state's fastest growing employment area. Health related professionals comprise a workforce priority for North Carolina because of critical workforce shortages in many health fields. State investments in distance education opportunities serve the state in two ways: first, by developing a critically needed workforce to meet the state's health care needs; and second, by preparing individuals for a booming job market. The Department of Allied Health Science is prepared to meet many of these needs. . In some disciplines, employers actually help to underwrite the cost of the educational programs for their employees. The Department's new Certificate in Auditory Hearing for Young Children with Hearing Loss exemplifies this thrust. The need for trained specialists in this area is so great within North Carolina and the rest of the country that foundation grants have been secured to underwrite major aspects of the program.

The School of Social Work's masters programs prepare social workers to assume leadership roles in human services organizations – an especially important role in counties where there are no or few professionally trained social workers. With the opportunities for currently employed social workers to obtain their MSW while remaining in their home community, the difficulties of recruiting competent staff are diminished. Distance Education students who are permanent residents of an established community are less likely to leave an agency once they have received their graduate degree.

New programs continue to be developed in the professional schools. The School of Public Health's Disaster Management certificate responds to the need to train the work force for emergencies. The School of Nursing has two new programs which serve these workforce needs. One new program is an executive model for training Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioners which helps alleviate the crises in the Mental Health system throughout the state. Another, Health Care System Advanced Practice area, has increased the number of online or executive module courses offered in their required core block. The Health Care System Advanced Practice area prepares nurse educators which are

needed at the community and college levels, as well as providing the knowledge and skills needed to succeed in a variety of leadership positions in health care organizations.

The RN-BSN program retains nurses in their community while addressing the demand for more nurses prepared at the baccalaureate level, particularly in underserved areas of the state.

**Partnerships:** The ¡A su salud! project, Spanish for Health Professionals, exemplifies collaborative relationships with community colleges, health care organizations and the schools of the UNC system. This Office of Distance Education and E-Learning Policy (ODEEP) project has involved East Carolina University and Durham Tech. The introductory version is being developed in cooperation with Wake Tech, East Carolina University, Wake AHEC, and with the Office of Minority Health which in turn will work with the historically minority universities. The School of Nursing works closely with public schools to educate students in nursing as a career and with community colleges to recruit qualified candidates. The PMH-NP program works with mental health facilities and other health care organizations to recruit qualified students. Efforts are made to identify potential students from populations under-represented in the nursing profession. The School of Public Health's distance education programs are involved in a variety of collaborative relationships. Some examples include the long-standing partnership between the Executive Masters Program and Blue Cross Blue Shield, the sponsorship of the new distance DrPH program by The Constella Group, the Public Health Leadership Program's three-year partnership with Higher Education Centers in Virginia, and the Core Concepts Certificate Program partnership with the AT Stills University Dental School. The School of Journalism and Mass Communication also works with community colleges. A number of community college instructors have enrolled in the JoMC's certificate courses. The School also supports an online program in journalism offered by Central Carolina Community College in Sanford.

#### Quality Assurance:

Many units on the UNC-Chapel Hill campus contribute to the effectiveness of distance/online learning at the University. These include the professional schools that deliver distance degree and certificate programs, and the William and Ida Friday Center for Continuing Education that offers online courses. In addition, other units provide support services for distance learning, such as the Center for Instructional Technology, the Center for Teaching and Learning, and the Academic Affairs and Health Sciences Libraries. The Distance Education Steering Committee (DESC) is composed of representatives from each professional school (except the law school) and the support units referenced above. The DESC makes recommendations to the Provost that focus on infrastructure and interdisciplinary needs that will benefit the distance education enterprise as a whole. The DESC focuses considerable attention on the evaluation of the effectiveness of distance learning. While assessment of program and learning outcomes is the primary responsibility of the academic unit sponsoring the program, DESC has served as a forum for the exchange of information on best practices among its members in both the delivery and evaluation of distance education. Units that participate in DESC submit annual reports to the Office of the Executive Vice Chancellor and Provost describing the evaluation of learning outcomes for their programs and/or the effectiveness of services provided in support of distance learning on campus.

Every UNC-Chapel Hill course offered through distance learning has a final evaluation component that is used to improve and enhance further distance offerings. Each course in a distance education degree or certificate program with an on-campus counterpart uses the same evaluation instruments that it uses for its on-campus students. Quality assurance in many instances also involves specialized or formative assessments on performance and student satisfaction, pre- and post-test measures of knowledge and skills, alumni surveys of students and of employers, and analysis of grades and student retention. To assure that the quality of its on- and off-campus programs is equivalent, a unit may compare grades and retention figures. Those units which have made these comparisons generally find no difference between on-campus and off-campus student performance. The Academic Affairs and Health Affairs Libraries, two of the University's most important support services, regularly assess the quality of library services and resources and find that satisfaction ratings are similar for distance learners and traditional students. As with the school programs, the libraries acknowledge that distance learners often operate in a more complex environment, and thus may conduct supplementary evaluations focused on the additional issues these learners face. Also, because many new Web-based resources and services are first introduced for distance learners, initial pilot phase evaluation may focus particularly on their needs.

To date, evaluation of the quality of distance education programs has occurred primarily within the unit offering the program. To encourage the collection of data that might be aggregated to provide an overall picture of the strengths and weaknesses of distance learning, the Center for Teaching and Learning and the Center for Instructional Technology have been working with a faculty/staff committee to develop a common bank of questions for distance education programs. These evaluation questions will be delivered online. After the new course evaluation system has been piloted in 2005, the expectation is that a portion of these questions will be required of all programs. The evaluation component will be tied to other major campus systems (e.g., course registration, "faculty/staff central," and "student central"). Deans, program directors, and faculty will be able to add questions to the system and review components as appropriate. The new evaluation system will support distance education as well as hybrid courses.

## **UNC Charlotte**

### Strategies:

UNC Charlotte's 2004-2009 Academic Plan for Distance Education identifies the following as priorities for off-campus delivery: baccalaureate completion programs, programs for school teachers and other school personnel, and programs which serve targeted workforce or public service needs of the state – e.g., programs for nurses and firefighters. The plan focuses UNC Charlotte on the delivery of programs of study rather than individual courses scheduled on a semester-by-semester ad hoc basis: undergraduate and graduate degrees, certificates, teacher licensure sequences. Whether a particular program is delivered at an off-campus site, via the Internet, or through a combination of the two, UNC Charlotte's approach promises prospective students specific delivery

method(s) for an entire program of study, recognizing that it is “where, when, and how” classes are offered that is often critical to a working adult’s ability to pursue higher education on a part-time basis. As part of its promise, UNC Charlotte lays out in its entirety the schedule of courses in a program, so that a student can rely on them being delivered at a particular off-campus site and/or via the Internet.

UNC Charlotte’s Distance Education (DE) focus is on serving the citizens and the needs of North Carolina – and most particularly the Charlotte region. Almost all sites for DE programs have been located in the region; the exceptions have been two unique programs (Special Education: Adapted Curriculum and Information Security and Privacy) which UNC Charlotte has delivered by arrangement with, and on the campus of, other UNC institutions.

UNC Charlotte’s commitment to expand the access of working adults in the Charlotte region to its instructional programs is realized only partially through what is categorized (for purposes of funding) as Distance Education. Equally important are outreach programs that are categorized as Regular-Term Instruction but are nonetheless formatted and promised for delivery in ways that serve the needs of working adults. For example, in FY 06 UNC Charlotte delivered 75 courses, generating 1,680 enrollments, at our Uptown Center, and we currently offer three master’s degrees and one licensure program, enrolling 127 teachers and principals, at low-performing schools and the Professional Development Center within the Charlotte-Mecklenburg school system. While this report focuses only on what is funded as Distance Education, it remains the case that UNC Charlotte’s strategic goal for expanding access includes these other forms of instructional outreach as well. Regardless of whether it is formally designated as Distance Education, UNC Charlotte plans to continue to target the needs of working adults in the region by expanding programming offered in Uptown Charlotte (with the construction of a new Uptown Center); evaluating the feasibility of establishing additional permanent off-campus facilities (e.g., in the Hickory area); working with community colleges, public schools, and medical facilities to schedule on-site delivery of time-specific, cohort-based programs that serve a critical mass of local needs; and otherwise marketing (promising) and delivering programs whose formats are designed to be attractive to working adults – e.g., by combining significant online delivery with a limited number of very focused face-to-face meetings – on the campus or at an off-campus site. Other potential programming options under review include establishing one or more of the following structures that have been found to facilitate adult participation in higher education – a Weekend College, an Evening College, a University College, and/or adult degree completion program(s) delivered in 8- or 10-week, rather than traditional 16-week, course terms.

#### Quality Assurance:

UNC Charlotte’s focus on programs guarantees the involvement of all key academic and student support units on campus in the planning of a particular off-campus delivery to a particular audience of students, and it ensures that programs, and the courses that comprise them, reflect the standards of quality and good practice that have been established by UNC Charlotte as part its Academic Plan for Distance Education. The Distance Education Office organizes an initial planning meeting for each Distance



Education program that is attended not only by representatives of the lead academic department but also by other academic departments whose courses will be included in the program, and by representatives from the Library, Information and Technology Services, Admissions, Financial Aid, Student Accounts, Institutional Research, and Assessment.

UNC Charlotte faculty teach in our Distance Education programs as part of their regular academic assignment. All Distance Education courses (even those taught during the Summer) are evaluated by students using the appropriate academic department's standard course evaluation instrument. Course evaluations, as well as student completion rates, distribution of student grades, and overall program assessment data are reviewed by the academic department, and comparisons are made between students enrolled in the Distance Education program and students enrolled in the comparable on-campus program. Questionnaires regarding student services are administered to Distance Education students by the Office of Distance Education at key points during the delivery of each program. Student services data are reviewed by the academic departments and key student support units. All evaluation data are analyzed with the intent to continually improve the quality of our current programs and to design even more effective Distance Education programs in the future.

Faculty developing courses for delivery as part of an online Distance Education program attend workshops to master UNC Charlotte's course management system, WebCT. Faculty participating in synchronous online programs are instructed in the use of Centra Symposium. An Instructional Technology Consultant is assigned to work one-on-one with each faculty member in the design of the course. A team of Instructional Technology Consultants from the Faculty Center for Teaching and e-Learning then provide ongoing support to the faculty, and they staff a Technical Help Desk that is available to students participating in Distance Education programs.

Prospective students in online Distance Education programs are provided with information to help them assess their readiness to succeed in such programs. The information covers not only the prerequisite technology-related knowledge and skills they will need, but also the study habits and learning styles that research has found to be most conducive to success and satisfaction with online learning. Students in all Distance Education programs are required to participate in a formal orientation prior to the start of their program. Orientations are conducted in a manner consistent with the instructional design of the program – e.g., online programs typically conduct the orientations online; site-based programs bring students together at the program's designated site(s). The orientation provides students with an overview of the entire program, information on how to access and use the technology that supports all Distance Education programs (e.g., e-mail, electronic Library materials and databases), very specific information on any technology being used to deliver a program's instruction (e.g., for online programs, information on how to use WebCT and Centra), and specific directions on how to access advising and other services that are available to all Distance Education students – e.g., through UNC Charlotte's Distance Education librarian, the Distance Education Technical Help Desk, and the Distance Education Manager assigned to support the faculty and the

students in each program. Students in Distance Education programs have access to the campus through a special toll-free telephone number.

## **UNC Greensboro**

### Strategies:

Rather than duplicating the university's entire curriculum in an online environment, UNCG plans to focus on programs where the university has recognized strengths and on programs that are not offered by other UNC campuses. For example, UNCG has a strong liberal studies curriculum, and therefore we offer both the B.A. and M.A. in Liberal Studies programs online. An example of a specialized degree program not offered by other campuses is our online M.S. in Conflict Resolution.

UNC Greensboro's distance learning strategic goals are tied to those of the UNCG Plan, which includes specific goals and strategic directions relating to distance learning. The UNCG Plan, for instance, states that the University will:

- Expand use of technology to improve teaching and learning for students on campus and at a distance.
- Improve support services for teaching and learning.
- Establish new undergraduate and graduate degree programs that respond to emerging needs in education, government, business, industry, and broader society.
- Offer programs and experiences that promote communities of learners.
- Develop and promote new opportunities for lifelong learning.
- Strengthen partnerships with universities, community colleges, and non-profit agencies in educating children/youth from birth through twelfth grade.
- Address regional workforce needs, including the shortage of trained professionals, through credit and non-credit programs and partnerships.
- Increase enrollments at all levels and among various student populations.
- Expand opportunities for adult learners.
- Ensure that quality student services are available to meet the needs of all learners.

One of the metrics for the UNCG Plan 2003-2008 is that by 2008, UNCG will enroll 2,000 students in distance learning students. In addition to the overall university plan, UNC Greensboro has a distance learning plan that more specifically outlines the goals in this area. The 2003-2008 Distance Education Plan not only articulates the University's mission and vision regarding distance learning, but also sets forth over a dozen goals related to distance learning, including:

- Focus on Learning, Not Technology
- Enhance Distance Learner Services
- Provide Training and Staff Support for Faculty
- Share Knowledge and Innovations
- Recognize and Compensate Faculty Contributions
- Integrate Distance Learning into Unit Plans
- Focus on Degrees and Certificates
- Target Specific Populations
- Offer Non-Traditional Schedules

- Continue to Update Technology and Infrastructure
- Establish a Distance Learning Committee
- Market All e-Learning under “UNCG iCampus”
- Reduce Costs of e-Learning, Increase Funding
- Promote Collaborations and Partnerships
- Utilize e-Learning Materials in Traditional Classes
- Assess Programs and Outcomes

The commitment of the University is that we will provide these distance learners with challenging, engaging, learner-centered opportunities that enhance their knowledge, critical thinking, creativity, and communication skills.

#### Quality Assurance:

Quality assurance is built into distance learning courses and programs at UNC Greensboro in six important ways: (1) articulating criteria and expectations, (2) ensuring oversight by faculty committees, (3) providing faculty with training in online pedagogy, (4) using a team approach to online course development, (5) providing outstanding student services to distance learners, and (6) assessing learner performance and satisfaction.

1. One way of ensuring the quality of distance learning courses is to articulate basic principles and share those with all faculty. UNCG’s Distance Learning Plan articulates a clear body of principles, including:

- Distance learning courses at UNCG must be at least of equal quality to traditional on-campus learning.
- Course content, learning activities, and good pedagogical practice should guide the choice of appropriate instructional technology.
- Permanent faculty and department heads must remain in control of curricula and course content.
- As with all instruction, the University expects permanent faculty to teach the majority of distance learning courses.
- Distance learning students must comply with all University standards and regulations.
- Distance learning students should receive services equal to those received by on-campus learners.

2. Faculty oversight of all curricular and instructional materials and activities is essential for quality assurance. To that end, UNC Greensboro has established a number of committees to review curriculum and individual courses. Take as an example the Bachelor of Arts in Liberal Studies (BLS) degree program, which is offered totally online. When it was first proposed in 2003, a committee in the College of Arts and Sciences reviewed the tentative curriculum and made recommendations for improvement. The curriculum was then forwarded to the Undergraduate Curriculum Committee for the whole university, which also reviewed it and made recommendations. When the curriculum was approved by the Undergraduate Curriculum Committee and the Provost, it was sent to the Office of the President for approval. Upon approval by the Office of the President as a distance learning program, UNC Greensboro set up a BLS Committee to review individual course proposals for the program; that committee carefully reviewed proposals and returned many of them for improvement. Resubmitted proposals that met the high expectations of the committee were then approved and developed. Committee

assessment of the curriculum, the course materials, and the instruction is an ongoing activity.

3. Faculty need professional development to learn how to create and teach online courses. To that end, UNC Greensboro provides a series of workshops to faculty through its Teaching and Learning Center. Some workshops concentrate on technology, such as Blackboard, Dreamweaver, and podcasting; others focus on online issues such as copyright and e-portfolios; and still others focus on elements of pedagogy, such as learning styles, case studies, problem-based learning, and collaborative learning.

4. To help faculty develop online courses that are engaging, interactive, and challenging, UNC Greensboro's Division of Continual Learning has created Web-authoring support teams to assist faculty in converting courses to the Web and has hired a Director of Online Learning to oversee teams. This team approach provides faculty access to a group of experts: a project manager, graphic designer, instructional designer, computer programmer, videographer, and editor. The faculty member, who is at the heart of the team, remains the content expert and architect of the course, but not the sole implementer. A team approach not only brings multiple perspectives and expertise to a course, but also takes much of the "grunt work" off faculty members, thereby allowing them to concentrate on pedagogy and content. In this model, non-faculty personnel provide much of the nuts-and-bolts work, including creation of graphics, shooting and editing video, computer programming, creation of animations, and proofreading. Many lower level tasks are in fact done by student workers.

5. Quality is also a matter of student support, and therefore we have developed various student services that are easily accessible by distance learners. For example:

- The Writing Center is offering its service to distance learners.
- Jackson Library provides a broad range of learning resources to all students, regardless of their location. For example, it provides numerous online resources that can be accessed remotely; it delivers other documents either electronically or in print; distance learners can request materials by filling out Web forms; there is an "ask a librarian" button on the library Web site; and toll-free telephone numbers are available to reach librarians. The library has even appointed a Coordinator of Library Services for Distance Education.
- The University has stipulated Blackboard as its primary courseware application so that students taking any online course will encounter the same interface.
- The campus IT unit has committed to 24/7 maintenance of Web servers and is training help desk personnel to assist distance learners.
- Enrollment Services has developed a Web registration system enabling all students to enroll in classes without coming to campus. UNCG's Virtual Information Station is a splendid, one-stop center at which all students can apply for admission, apply for financial aid, register for classes, activate computer accounts, pay bills, and check grades. Once distance learners receive their log-in and password information, they can conduct most business transactions via the Web.
- Forms and publications have almost all been placed online, such as the *Undergraduate Bulletin*, *Graduate Bulletin*, and application forms; degree audit checks are now automated.

6. Because assessment is the ultimate test of a program's success, we build in assessments of both student satisfaction and student performance. Early in an online course, we query students to see if they are having any technical difficulties accessing materials or communicating with the professor. Each course requires examinations and

papers, and students' work is typically compiled into an electronic portfolio. In contrast to a face-to-face course, in an online course all of a student's work is captured in a database, which the professor can view and gauge the student's performance. The professor can view each click of the mouse that the student does, assess the student's decision making, and evaluate his or her progress in the course. At the end of the course, and frequently several times in-between, we survey students about the course materials and the professor's teaching. The results of those surveys are used to revise and improve the course.

## **UNC Pembroke**

### **Strategies:**

The Office of Distance Education functions primarily as a portal that provides the technologies and administrative support for various academic departments to export their degree programs across the state and beyond. Programs are offered through face-to-face, online and hybrid methodologies. The Associate Vice Chancellor for Outreach, Dr. Collie Coleman, and the Director of Distance Education, Dr. Charles Tita, worked in concert with the leadership of academic departments, schools and other service units to submit to the U.S. Army a proposal to offer seven degree programs at the Fort Bragg Post. The proposal was approved, as submitted, in January 2005. In fall 2005, UNC Pembroke began to offer classes at Fort Bragg. The School Education and the North Carolina Model Teacher Consortium (NCMTEC) are working to enable more lateral entry candidates toward a successful completion of state licensure requirements. Distance education is reaching out to a vast pool of teachers from across North Carolina, ranging from further-most eastern/western/eastern and southern/northern boundaries of the State, via a functional, collaborative effort with the UNCP School of Education in conjunction with the North Carolina Model Teacher Consortium.

### **Quality Assurance:**

All Distance Education students must meet the same admission requirements as on-campus students. Once admitted, these students are assigned academic advisors. The academic integrity of UNC Pembroke's distance education programs is ensured, in part, by insisting that regular faculty teach a significant number of courses. Further, the full-time faculty who teach distance education courses are supplemented by a cadre of well qualified and properly credentialed adjunct faculty. Distance education students are assigned academic advisors by degree program that are available to them through actual, on-site visits, email, and/or telephone. Students enrolled in distance education courses evaluate each course every semester. These course evaluations are submitted to the appropriate dean and department chair and utilized to assess program effectiveness and to make improvements. The evaluation of same courses offered on campus provides meaningful comparative data regarding program quality and effectiveness. In addition to the standard course evaluation assessment, the Office of Distance Education is currently preparing an instrument that will be used to assess students' satisfaction with their whole distance education experience. This holistic survey will look at how students view their entire experience, including the available selection of course offerings, the registration process, technical support, access to library resources and services, and whether the students feel as an actual part of the University of North Carolina at Pembroke.

A program coordinator is based at the Richmond Community, Sandhills Community College, and Fort Bragg sites. Additionally, the On-line Program Coordinator is responsible for stand-alone site courses and online courses. The four coordinators serve as the front-line point of contact for students. Sampson-Livermore Library employs a full-time Distance Education Librarian who provides students with individualized reference and instructional services, as well as expedites document delivery services where research materials (books, reports, articles, etc.) are sent directly to the students. Some materials are digitized and are made available to students via a state-of-the-art electronic course reserve system. The Library contains 335,176 books and subscribes to more than 100 electronic databases that include full-text access to 21,598 journal titles, many of which are scholarly peer-reviewed resources. With students having access to such superior library resources and services, faculty are encouraged to develop academically rigorous courses that have the same research components as in their traditional on-campus courses.

The E-Learning Computer Consultant provides orientation to online learners, as well as assists students and faculty with the use of necessary technology. In an ongoing effort to support our students, Distance Education has developed an on-line tutorial for students who are not able to come to campus for the BLACKBOARD orientations held at the beginning of each semester. In order to ensure that this online tutorial meets faculty needs, a survey was designed and sent to various members of the UNCP community. With this feedback, the tutorial can be revised to ensure that students are receiving the information they need to successfully complete online courses. In partnership with the Richmond Community College Media Center and Information Systems Support Team, UNCP has first-rate Direct Technology Access with its main campus through the Interactive Video System, offering a direct feed from the Business Administration building on the UNCP campus to the Conder Media Specialties Classroom in the RCC Media Center. The RCC classroom, equipped with Smart board® technologies, allows image-to-image, real-time contact between faculty/students.

## **UNC Wilmington**

### Strategies:

UNCW's Distance Education program is a model program, collaborating closely with both Coastal Carolina Community College, the county public school system, and nearby military installations. UNCW's Extension Program in Onslow county offers two complete master's degrees (Liberal Studies and Elementary Education) and the last two years of three baccalaureate degrees: Elementary Education, Criminal Justice, and Nursing--all without leaving Onslow county. Our undergraduate students complete their basic studies courses from the local community college (or elsewhere, as many are military affiliated), and then complete the remaining courses for their baccalaureate degree through UNCW. Our classes are held both at Coastal Carolina Community College and aboard Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune. Our three offices, located at

Coastal Carolina Community College, Camp Lejeune, and New River Air Station, show our commitment to serving all members of our community.

UNCW's Extension Program in Onslow County is unique in that our staff has developed close personal relationships with our community partners. For example, the Extension Admissions Counselor attends biweekly Admissions counselor meetings at Coastal Carolina Community College to share information and collaborate on advising students. The Extension Program director serves on numerous community committees, including the Jacksonville-Onslow Chamber of Commerce's Education Committee, the Chamber's Military Affairs Committee, and the Swansboro Area Chamber of Commerce's Military Affairs Committee. This committee work fosters relationships with community members through monthly meetings and altruistic events. Moreover, the locations of our three offices enable our staff to develop personal relationships with the Base Education Officer at Camp Lejeune, New River Air Station, and the President of Coastal Carolina Community College. It is these strong, stable relationships and our willingness to assess/meet to our community's needs, in addition to the excellence and variety of programs we offer, that make our Distance Education program extremely unique.

#### Quality Assurance:

UNCW ensures the quality of our distance offerings by having our tenure-track faculty commute to Onslow County to teach curriculum classes. Very few of the Extension classes (except our RN-BSN program) are offered online. Moreover, if the courses are offered online, whether extension or on campus, they are typically taught by full-time UNCW faculty. A percentage of our classes are taught by adjunct faculty whose credentials are reviewed by home departments at UNCW. Only adjunct faculty members who meet the same standards as UNCW main campus faculty are hired to teach our extension and online courses.

Most extension undergraduate and graduate advising is done on-site in Onslow County. The Extension program has an on-site Academic Advisor/Admissions counselor who advises all transfer students who are interested in our program. Moreover, we have a full-time academic advisor for all undergraduate elementary education students, an advisor for undergraduate Criminal Justice students, and an advisor for graduate Liberal Studies students--all permanently assigned to the Onslow county offices. A second education advisor, for licensure students who already have earned a baccalaureate degree, comes to Onslow county for pre-registration advising sessions at least once a semester. Additional advising is done via email/phone. The advisors for Nursing and graduate Elementary Education students are tenured faculty who advise from the main campus via email/phone; this advising method has been sufficient, according to the students in those prospective programs. If a student needs advising, and his/her advisor is not immediately available, we serve them immediately in one of our three offices. We never turn a current or prospective student away. This method has been acceptable to all parties involved: the student, the advisor, and our Extension program staff.

Our students have equivalent academic and technological support services as UNCW's main campus. If students need academic support, faculty are available for assistance

since they are physically present each week. UNCW provides three computer labs, two at Coastal Carolina Community College (CCCC) and one at Camp Lejeune, for student use and technological support for these labs comes from both CCCC staff and UNCW main campus assistance. Our distance education students have five libraries, with librarian assistance, for their use: one at Coastal Carolina Community College, two aboard Camp Lejeune, one at New River Air Station, and UNCW main campus library, Randall library, which provides distance access that is unmatched. Students using Randall library can contact a librarian by either calling toll-free, emailing, or through instant messenger. Moreover, any article or book that the student needs can be sent to the distance education student, with a postage-paid return envelope included. The services are all-inclusive and are explained to each student during their transfer orientation (undergraduates) or graduate orientation (graduates) by a Randall Library staff member.

Additionally, UNCW bookstore services are provided on-site to our distance education students. Five to six times per year, the UNCW bookstore commutes from Wilmington to Jacksonville and sets up a bookstore at Coastal Carolina Community College. The bookstore sells textbooks and ancillaries for upcoming extension courses (both graduate and undergraduate), buys back textbooks from previous semesters, and sells UNCW merchandise that has been requested by students (e.g., t-shirts, sweatshirts, hats, decals, key chains, etc.). This service is supplemented with online bookstore services through the UNCW website. Finally, during the on-site orientation given to each student, auxiliary services explains their services (ID use, Sea Card, Parking) and takes photos needed for processing official UNCW identification cards. After new student registration begins, enrollment is verified, and ID cards are made and sent to the Coastal Carolina Community College office for pick-up.

Distance education online courses are used to supplement face-to-face classes (except for the Nursing program). When students do have problems, technologically or otherwise, with online classes, our Extension program staff is available to help. Our staff has experience taking UNCW online classes and can troubleshoot with any student having problems. Typically, if a student is having a problem, it is due to the computer's technological problems--and when this is the problem, we have computers available for student use. Finally, at times the faculty teaching online classes like to meet with their class, face-to-face, to develop a rapport with the class and rectify any problems the students might have. In such cases, the faculty member commutes to Onslow county to have such meetings.

## **Western Carolina University**

### Strategies:

Distance learning is a main component in the growth market for the university. Access is provided at area community colleges and through on-line programs and partnerships with various outside educational sponsors such as the Hickory Metro Higher Education Center. During this academic year, partnerships with Tri-County Community College and Western Piedmont Community College were expanded with a comprehensive agreement



and a partnership agreement was struck with Pardee Memorial Hospital to support area programs related to positive aging.

Distance learning partnerships established with Tri-County and Western Piedmont Community Colleges are designed to bring Western Carolina University to regional hubs. Our community college partnerships, as outlined in the comprehensive agreement, established these community colleges as the local university center for degree completion programs, graduate degrees, certificate programs and collaborative efforts with area schools, health care facilities, business, industry and government. In addition we are extending dual admission to students at the community college.

The mission of the Western Carolina University-Cherokee Center is to serve tribal and non-tribal residents of Cherokee and the surrounding communities with recruitment, retention and outreach. A basic function of the Cherokee Center is to provide more convenient access to prospective students. The Center offers assistance to prospective students in completing applications for both admission and financial aid, to any student requesting it. The Cherokee Center cabin offers a welcoming environment within the community to provide information regarding the advantages of attending WCU on the Cullowhee Campus. A memorandum of agreement has been struck between the university and the Eastern Band of the Cherokee Indian to facilitate outreach and education developmental interests. A Tsalagi Institute has been proposed that will be centered in the Division and serve as a resource and operational center to fulfill the mission of the agreement.

Military education was instituted with the appointment of the university's first military Education Director in April 1, 2005. The first few months of this brand new initiative was spent in developing the infrastructure to support military students, outreach to military branches and installations and designing a marketing strategy. Current programs include a partnership with the National Guard to market on-line graduate programs nationwide. A Memorandum of Agreement with the National Guard has been executed. We are now part of the national program for Guardsmen which will bring us national exposure, making Western a viable choice for interested Guardsmen.

#### Quality Assurance:

WCU is committed to providing the same level of quality instruction to students enrolled in distance education programs as for students in on-campus degree programs. In general, the same evaluation processes for course and instructor quality used on campus are used for distance programs as well. Program assessment is typically done on a course-by-course basis. Some of the approaches to ensuring quality include: student surveys on quality of course and instructor, analysis of student performance and demographic data, surveys of satisfaction with services such as registration and library access, peer evaluation of teaching, program advisory councils, use of evaluation specialists, and feedback from employers and internships.

Each UNC distance education program must provide a variety of quality-related information to the Office of the President before the program is authorized for establishment, including: intended outcomes and learning objectives, curriculum and schedule, faculty and support staff, library and learning resources, physical resources, financial support, and evaluation and assessment. These requirements conform to standards established by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS)

Commission on Colleges (COC), which includes quality of distance education programs among the criteria that accredited institutions must address.

## **Winston-Salem State University**

### **Strategies:**

The Office of Distance Learning collaborates with university departments to provide degree and degree completion program opportunities through online, web-assisted, site based and interactive video instruction. The university collaborates with various program related agencies to identify program opportunities for employees and other prospective students. The university also collaborates with community colleges to develop articulation agreements for the Associate of Applied Science degree. We currently have agreements with 13 community colleges for programs in Nursing, Business Administration (course transfer), Early Childhood Education, Accounting (course transfer), Information Systems (course transfer), Human Services Technology, and EMS & EMT Certificate Program. The university offers six distance learning degree or degree completion baccalaureate programs and lateral entry programs with a focus on ensuring consistency between campus based and off-campus programs: RN-BSN, Clinical Laboratory Science, Interdisciplinary Studies, Birth to Kindergarten Education, and Lateral Entry/Certification Program in Physical Education, and Lateral Entry for Middle Level or Secondary Preparation. Three programs are online, two are site-based programs, and one is a combination of online and site-based. Beginning Summer 2006, the university will offer its first online master's program in Rehabilitation Counseling. All of our programs undergo an approval process that involves department, college and school committees prior to submission to the Distance Learning Strategic Planning Committee and the UNC Office of the Associate Vice President for Academic Planning. This process ensures consistency in curricula for on-campus and distance learning programs.

### **Quality Assurance:**

The Center for Teaching, Technology, Learning and Evaluation (CITTLE) works with each faculty in the course development process. A systematic process, entitled the CTDDP (Course Training Design Development Package), is used to create and evaluate all web-based instruction. The process ensures that faculty connect course objectives with instructional strategies and creates a framework that aligns those objectives with technologies. Faculty members must complete activities against four benchmarks related to the development of the course: The course is evaluated by faculty with content expertise and with expertise in instructional methodology. Evaluation criteria are grouped in four areas: content, design, technical, and course management. The course must receive a satisfactory score in all areas before the course can be offered.

Distance Learning students have on-line access to the WSSU Distance Library services and resources. The WSSU library has employed a full-time distance librarian who collaborates with the distance education coordinators to ensure that the library is accessible to distance learners and faculty. The distance education librarian at WSSU is available to visit sites at the beginning of a new cohort group and does an orientation to

the electronic resources and services available to the distance learners. This information is supplemented by a Distance Learner Library resource guide that is given in a hard copy format.

All faculty have email accounts that they may access to receive information and communicate with the main campus or students. Whenever a student enrolls, they are assigned an email address at WSSU. Orientation for faculty and students concerning how to access and utilize the email and other electronic services and resources available at WSSU is done by Computer Support personnel and the coordinators at the beginning of each cohort group. The students have access to the WSSU Bookstore and may order books on-line. The WSSU admissions, cashiers and financial aid offices are all available to students on-line as well as by telephone.