**Los Rios Colleges Online Coordinating Council Recommendations**

**Program Development, Program Delivery & Learner Support, and**

**Training & Professional Growth**

**Background**

The Los Rios Colleges Online Coordinating Council (Coordinating Council) was convened in the Spring 2020 semester under the direction of the four college Academic Senate Presidents, the District Academic Senate President and the four College Presidents (the Executive Sponsors). The Coordinating Council was charged with developing a series of recommendations for Online Education across four distinct areas of College/District operations: Instruction; Student Support Services; Professional Development; and Information Technology.

Four participatory governance workgroups were established to address each of these areas, with representation of faculty, classified staff and administration from all four colleges and the district office. Working from the project charter as developed by the Executive Sponsors, three of the four workgroups met from the Fall 2020 through the Fall 2021 semesters to discuss the Los Rios Colleges Online project and expanded Online Education resources/plans.

The following set of recommendations summarize the work of the three groups – Program Development (Instruction), Program Delivery and Learner Support (Student Support Services), and Training and Professional Growth (Professional Development). These recommendations are the product of many months of deliberation and were informed by the expertise of the Coordinating Council’s members as well as findings of the four LRCO Incubator programs (Business Administration at ARC, Health Information Technology at CRC, Communication Studies at FLC and Administration of Justice at SCC).

**Equity as a Guiding Principle**

The Coordinating Council’s recommendations are grounded in an equity-based framework, and as such all recommendations are informed by the interests of our students with the greatest barriers to success. Factors such as equity gaps in student success, student income, access to reliable broadband internet/computers and preparation for success in the online space have guided every recommendation.

**Definition of a Fully Online Program**

There are currently several definitions of a fully online program within Los Rios. The Coordinating Council recognizes the need to establish a consistent definition across the District that encapsulates essential components of a fully online program[[1]](#footnote-2). The Coordinating Council recommends the following components:

1. Students do not have to physically visit a campus for any reason.
2. Fully online courses and programs are available – All courses within the program map (including General Education) are offered fully online. The college must commit to scheduling all General Education courses and courses within the major fully online. Online course inventory is broad enough to meet increasing student demand.
3. Fully developed support services online – Direct access college services (see below) are accessible online.
4. Programs can be completed in a timely manner – Full time students can complete degrees and certificates in four semesters or less.
5. Department/Division Commitment – Fully online programs demonstrate a commitment to program excellence, through a demonstrated commitment to high quality online instruction, as identified by the LRCO Program Readiness Checklist.

**Improving Access**

The Coordinating Council recommends that all fully online programs meet the readiness criteria (see checklist below).

During the application process, students will be given the option to pursue the selected fully online programs, granting appropriate access[[2]](#footnote-3) to in person courses. This will help ensure that fully online students gain access to the courses they need to graduate without being forced to substitute with an in person course.

**Recruitment & Onboarding**

The Coordinating Council recommends utilizing a customer relations management (CRM) tool to recruit and increase enrollment in the colleges’ fully online programs. Nearly 40% of prospective students who complete a CCCApply application do not enroll in courses. To reduce attrition, district office staff will use a CRM tool to automate communication based on milestones and applicant behaviors, as well as connect and nudge high risk applicants. With a primary focus on recruitment and onboarding, district staff (2 student support specialists) will focus on the following:

* Marketing & Recruitment
	+ Market and recruit for fully online programs
* Onboarding: Setting Students up for Success
	+ Support students with CCCApply, eServices, assessments, submitting transcripts, financial aid, placement info, etc. Provide handoffs to other staff as needed.
	+ Assessment of online readiness
	+ Assessment of career interests/degree programs
	+ Guiding students to select an appropriate course load
	+ Facilitate use of Degree Planner and counseling services to develop a degree/cert plan
* Orientation & Navigation[[3]](#footnote-4)
	+ Offer registration and enrollment support in groups and individually
	+ Introduce and familiarize students with online resources and platforms
	+ Provide targeted support and training to students with limited online/technology experience
* Facilitating College Connections
	+ Warm referrals to connect students with college-based coaches, counselors, academic support programs, and student services
* Ongoing Online Support
	+ Offer a resource hub for fully online students at each college
		- Webinars, events & activities for fully online students in the first semester, as a way to prepare students for the online environment (online study skills, online resources, using Canvas etc.)
		- Facilitate Canvas communities
			* Connecting students to online resources, such as online volunteer/internship opportunities and online college events
			* Reminders on deadlines
			* Announcements of online events/activities
			* Events with small group breakouts
			* Transfer planning

**Student Success**

Classroom instruction is a critical component to student success, and faculty training and professional development play a role in ensuring student success. To ensure continued quality and improvement of online courses, the Coordinating Council recommends the following online training and professional development activities:

* Foundations Training – basic level training to assist faculty in becoming dynamic instructors in the online course modality
* Accessibility Training – peer training on universal design, accessible content and navigation
* Next Level Training– advanced training to improve online instruction, including equity/inclusion practices
* CVC-OEI Course Alignment –peer mentoring and support to align online courses to the CVC-OEI rubric

**College-Coordinated Model**

The Coordinating Council recommends the adoption of a College-Coordinated Model for ownership of fully online programs. In this model, a designated Manager at the colleges works with the college instructional departments to estimate enrollment demand and schedule courses. The specific roles and responsibilities in this model are listed below:

Scheduling Sections & Enrollment Management

* Review data to project enrollment demand for major courses
* Monitor enrollment of online major courses and add additional sections as needed
* Work with division deans to schedule online sections
* Establish the overseeing department as ‘location’ in PS for enrollment tracking

With improved analytics fed into the Degree Planner tool, colleges will have access to data by the distance education modality that will enhance the ability to forecast projected course demand. However, in the interim, colleges will use past enrollment data to predict future needs.

**Student Services**

The Coordinating Council recommends completion of an Online Student Services and Academic Support Resource Plan that defines how the college will support and serve online students. This plan should be based on a template (to-be-developed by a participatory governance workgroup recommended below) that at minimum includes these services:

* College will monitor virtual student support appointments offered after 5 pm, and add additional hours if needed[[4]](#footnote-5)
* College will offer evening online tutoring appointments in specific subjects related to the major
* College will provide a coaching and case management model that includes accessible and comprehensive support for online students

The following services have been identified as areas that should provide direct access (i.e. accessible without a person as an intermediary) for online students:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| ·        Admissions & Records·        Career Services·        Case management contacts (success coaches, etc)·        Counseling | ·        Financial Aid·        Library·        Transfer Center·        Tutoring |

The following services have been identified as having facilitated access (i.e. requiring connection with a person) for online students:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| * ASHE Center
* CalFresh
* CalWorks
* Health Services
* CARE
* Disability Support
* EOPS
 | * NextUp
* Puente
* Reemerging Scholars
* Umoja
* Undocu-resource
* Other affinity groups
* Veteran’s Services
 |

**LRCO Program Readiness Checklist**

1. There is a published program map, offering 6 to 9 units in the major each semester and the golden four (English, speech and math) in the first year.
2. All college departments, divisions and instruction offices are committed to offering online major sections as outlined and sequenced in the Program Pathway map, as well as a sufficient number of online GE courses.
3. All courses in the program pathways have been approved for 100% Distance Education by the local curriculum committee and are offered fully online.
4. The online program pathway/map has been approved through the local college Guided Pathways process.
5. The college department can demonstrate demand for a fully online version of the program.
6. The college has created an Online Student Services and Academic Support Resource Plan that defines how the college is going to support and serve online students.
7. The college is prepared to use data to monitor student success, make adjustments in core program areas (e.g. scheduling, support services/resource plan), and reallocate resources as necessary to ensure student success.
8. The online pathway is integrated into the host department’s formal program review process, assessing the following:
	1. online program pathway outcomes
	2. online program pathway map
	3. online tutoring plan
9. The program is available in Degree Planner.
10. Program has a high percentage of CVC-OEI aligned courses.
11. CTE programs have sufficient labor market needs as identified by the Strong Workforce Program criteria.

**Emphasis on Technology**

The Coordinating Council did not convene the fourth workgroup identified within the original scope of work – Online Architecture and District Support – as the emphasis on quickly scaling technology solutions during the response to COVID made the efforts to localize LRCO objectives redundant. The completion of these recommendations, with their emphasis on specific technology-driven strategies for scaling access and support services across multiple colleges/programs, necessitates that the next phase of this project prioritize an emphasis on technology. Specifically, plans to incorporate the proposed tech solutions to scale onboarding and to coordinate subsequent recommendations into the core operations of IT should be developed.

**Assessment of Program Readiness**

The aforementioned recommendations will require some form of review and assessment, with in some instances more clearly defined objectives and metrics to assess program readiness. It is thus the recommendation of the Coordinating Council that a participatory governance committee be convened for this purpose. There is precedence for this type of committee in Los Rios’ Program Placement Council (PPC), which exists to review and approve new program proposals. This committee’s initial task would be to develop formal templates to operationalize the Program Readiness Checklist, including a template for the Online Student Services and Academic Support Resource Plan.

The committee further recommends that formal acknowledgement of a program as fully online be subject to approval by this committee. Formal acknowledgement would make accessible marketing of the program as fully online and provide access to the recommended onboarding resources.

1. The recommendations below are directed towards programs that seek to market themselves as fully online and are not intended to prohibit a department from pursuing fully online courses. The Coordinating Council recognizes that there are currently many departments across the colleges with large portions of their programs available online. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. One suggestion for “appropriate access” included staggered priority registration for online vs. in person courses. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. The LRCO orientation augments the college’s formal orientation by providing online specific resources. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. Emphasis on evening programming support comes from an identified gap of student support services after 5 PM. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)