

Cerro Coso Online: KCCD's solution to the State Wide OEI and FTES Decline

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January 22, 2015

The Challenge:

The latest Enrollment Update is predicting that KCCD will fall short of hitting its annual FTES target by 344 FTES despite growth at BC. For AY 2015, Cerro Coso and Porterville are projected to lose an estimated 565 FTES. The reasons are different for the two colleges. At Cerro Coso Community College, for example, the decline began in AY 2012 together with a change in enrollment activity both in traditional and online courses. While the boom in FTES was not expected to last, reinventing exactly what the college would be able to sustain has been daunting. No longer does scheduling an online course result in fully subscribed courses nor are our traditional courses experiencing large fill rates. To date the college has embraced calculated expansion into Tehachapi with is growing appropriately, but to what level will sustainable FTES become has not yet been determined. Additionally, providing credit courses to the inmates at the California City Correctional Facility is being developed, but realizing a sustained FTES is not yet determined.

In the meantime, despite these losses, KCCD continues to leave large numbers of students on waitlists. In spring 2015 alone, KCCD will have 1,030.3 unserved FTES due to being left on waitlists of which 104.85 FTES are those students choosing to enroll in an online course. Over the past three years presidents have discussed serving the students who were sitting on waitlists to fill online courses in those that have been articulated to assist in the students' educational progress, but to date there has not been a sustainable solution established for this to be ongoing.

Now there are larger looming online solutions being developed through our State Chancellor's Office, which is the Online Education Initiatives. These initiatives consist of the development toward several system wide solutions from a common assessment tool, admissions form, and a portal which students across the state will soon be encouraged to access where they will find the student services required by SSS&P available and a list of online classes to choose from. The purpose behind developing these was to direct students on community college waitlists to open course sections across the state to keep them progressing towards their academic goals in a timely way.

The challenge in a nutshell is that if KCCD does not find a way to direct its own waitlisted students into open courses across the district, these students will likely make use of the OEI portal to find open seats elsewhere across the state, thus depriving KCCD of the opportunity to serve them and the FTES. As the numbers show, student enrollments amounting to 200 annual FTES are already preferring the online mode, just waiting for open seats. But a fair question is how many of the other 1400 FTES would go online, even if not their first choice, if they had an easy way to further their education.

Researched Options:

In 2008 a report was completed that provided an analysis of KCCD's online programs, including all three college's student and learning services as well as academic programs offered. At that time several recommendations were made throughout the report and two viable solutions for the future of the three colleges distance education programs was provided. Since then the higher education landscape has once again changed as previously explained and due to flat and declining FTES within the KCCD service area it appears it would benefit KCCD to get ahead of the State's OEI solutions and create our own online solution for KCCD students. Below are recommendations reflecting two options. One, if we were to stay the course (option 1), as well as a review of option 2, which alludes to the centralization of DE district wide.

As stated in the 2008 report, the intention was that the KCCD distance education leadership review the report and its recommendations, and through appropriate processes identify and prioritize areas that may require change, both at the campus and district levels, and to establish a timeline and dedicate resources for implementing such changes, ultimately resulting in the development of a district wide long term strategic plan for online education.

An observation at that time was that each DE Unit appeared to be doing an effective job of delivering online instruction and support services to students, FTES was stable or growing at each college, and the cost of supporting online was relatively low. Which led to a rhetorical question, "Why change anything at all?" Even if we continued down the path of three colleges with three DE Units and three separate online entities, there were these recommendations that were raised due to identified gaps in providing students the best possible educational online experience.

Option 1: Stay the Course and consider the following observations and recommendations.

Equity and Comparability:

In reviewing all three colleges a few discrepancies were identified where some online services and resources were not equitable and in some cases not available unless a student goes to a campus. This was an important point due to the large percentage of students throughout the KCCD service area (ranging from 26% to 39%) specifically were enrolling in online classes because they were unable to come to a campus.

Recommendation 1: Regardless of the organization of distance education within the District, there needs to be a district wide commitment to online students guaranteeing that online students will receive online services and resources, available at a distance, equivalent to those services and resources that are available on campus. Therefore, centralizing these services and resources from one online campus that is available to all KCCD online students would have more of a feeling of cohesiveness and continuity between the three online campuses. *The recommendation of establishing such a commitment should be a fundamental goal district wide, with an early timeline and high priority for its completion.*

Consistency:

It was pointed out that it was redundant to have three orientations to online when all three colleges could link to common content, and similarly to any core resources that would best

benefit the students by standardizing them. This goes from accessing courses, requesting help, buying books, to the proctoring processes. Very few of the services or resources provided couldn't be streamlined and adopted at all three colleges.

Recommendation 2: Identify core resources that would best benefit the students by standardizing them. Consolidate and standardize such resources through a collaborative process which could potentially reduce the workload across all of the online campuses as well as ensure that all colleges are providing comparable core resources to students, which again, provides students with a feeling of cohesiveness and continuity between the three online campuses.

Collaboration:

There needs to be the recognition that collaboration between the colleges is essential to best serve students. If all of the colleges were to share their efforts in development of learning resources, for example, then students at each online college would benefit by having access to the same level of online services. To date, there appears to be a tendency to reinvent resources rather than sharing them. Additionally, Academic Senates could best address issues of establishing a common approach to faculty training requirements and the establishment of minimum standards or required class components for an acceptable online class through working with the DE Units district wide, in a collaborative fashion.

Recommendation 3: Collaboration among segments within the colleges, and collaboration among the DE Units combined with the establishment of district wide standards related to online services, resources and instruction would result in more consistent and successful online learning experiences for students. Any district wide online planning should place an emphasis on collaboration between colleges in order to:

- Minimize/eliminate the duplication of efforts and preserve funding
- Facilitate the sharing of resources and services where practical
- Create a consistent and comfortable district wide online interface for online that is common to all colleges through which students can move seamlessly from one online campus to another with the KCCD.
- Develop common training resources and establish district wide standards for minimum standards or required class components to insure online course content for students.
- Develop a common marketing plan that promotes all online colleges and is specifically designed to attract online students.

The above recommendations are proposed to address gaps as long as we are staying status quo which we have been doing. There are other recommendations that have been adopted since the release of this report that were not included in the list above. Below is the second recommended option that reflects the essence of what had been suggested.

Option 2: Consolidate the three college's online programs into one district wide online campus. One of the college's would be designated as the administrative center for online education. Whereas each of the college's would continue to operate their Distance Education Departments, but that department would then report up and work with the centralized administrative center, creating a single unified KCCD Online Campus.

The administrative center would be responsible for:

- Coordinating online courses/programs and developing a district wide online schedule of classes
- Coordinating a central online portal for all online students
- Insure that a standard set of online services and resources are available to online students through a common online interface including:
 - Student support services
 - Student orientation
 - Library services
 - Help desk
 - Tutoring
 - Proctoring
 - Support and training
 - Maintain the course management systems and other related resources
 - Provide faculty with ongoing training and support

Faculty and staff would remain where they are and each college would receive apportionment through an agreed upon formula so to benefit all involved.

A carefully designed consolidated KCCD Online Campus could explore possibilities such as the following:

- Develop articulation agreements and partner status with four year colleges and universities that enable online students to transfer following the completion of their degrees (similar to that of the engineering agreement with CSULB)
- Ramp up providing educational opportunities to both active military personnel and veterans.
- Market online academy programs to target audiences across the state.

Recommendation:

It is clear that Governor Brown and those selected to participate in the State OEI development are expecting to reap the benefit to students and their own colleges for that matter. In a climate that where we are poised to offer KCCD students the same benefit, however tailored specifically to where our own students are stuck on waitlists is not only the right thing to do but also keeps them within our district, assists us with hitting our FTES targets, and ultimately gives KCCD a vehicle to manage hitting our growth targets. Therefore, I am proposing that Cerro Coso's Distance Education Department take the lead in phasing in option II a centralized KCCD online presence, with three phases.

Phase one would be to address part of Recommendation #3, "Create a consistent and comfortable district wide online interface for online that is common to all colleges through which students can move seamlessly from one online campus to another with the KCCD." By utilizing this interface, courses having significant waitlists of online students near the beginning of each semester will be automatically moved into new CRNs of articulated courses. An analysis of the

past three years for all three colleges will need to be completed to identify which disciplines are in the highest demand, as will the recruitment and training of the additional faculty in those disciplines, and building of the schedules to accommodate those students through CC Online. A cursory look at the spring 2015 schedule suggests launching math and English courses would meet a huge need.

Tenure track faculty with a successful record in the selected programs or disciplines will be provided the opportunity to receive a 100% online class assignment so to be champions of the development of the centralized online campus. District IT will be involved in developing a process that creates a smooth enrollment transition into those courses once a student has been placed on BC or PC's waitlist in the equivalent course. Additionally we will need to implement a strong marketing message to our students and beyond that we are ramping up to meet their needs for shortening time to completion.

Implementation timeline is summer 2015.

Phase two, simultaneously call for a district wide task force whose charge is to create the portal that will host KCCD Online that will provide all the above student and learning services outlined above. The Task Force suggested membership includes DE Administrators and Staff, the VPs of Academic Affairs, VPs of Student Services, IT Directors, and select faculty leadership from all three colleges that are steeped in online andragogy. Through the consolidation of the work that has already been completed, analyze current enrollment trends, and provide direction to the work to be accomplished to launch this online solution to ultimately serve all those students clamoring for online courses and programs who are left on our waitlists.

Implementation timeline is spring 2016.

Phase three would call for institutionalizing a district wide online college steering committee whose charge would be to address the remaining recommendations found in the 2008 report, develop the Online Strategic Plan, and Marketing Plan, and systematically assess the progress made through the newly established centralized model.

Implementation timeline is fall 2016.

Through implementing the above recommendations the expected outcome is to stabilize Cerro Coso and Porterville's FTES, increase success and completion in all online courses for all three colleges, and not lose KCCD students to the State's Online Education Initiative.