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DISTANCE EDUCATION POLICY: A STUDY OF THE SREB FACULTY SUPPORT
POLICY CONSTRUCT AT FOUR VIRTUAL COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY
CONSORTIA.

By

Kathleen A. MacKenzie
B. S., University of Louisville, 2000
M. Ed., University of Louisville, 2001

A Dissertation
Submitted to the Faculty of the
Graduate School of the University of Louisville
for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

College of Education and Human Development
University of Louisville
Louisville, Kentucky

May 2009

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A Dissertation Approved on

May 5, 2009

By the following Dissertation Committee:

Carolyn Rude-Parkins

Dissertation Chair

Thomas Reio

Dissertation Co-Chair

Sam Miller

Ann Swank

Gale Rhodes

DEDICATION

Dedico este trabajo a mis padres, Dorita y Adrian MacKenzie, por darme el regalo de la vida. A mi hermana, Diane, por ayudarme a descubrir el valor del conocimiento. A Hardy por compartir conmigo su curiosidad en la tecnología y los años universitarios que compartimos. Y a mi tía Yolanda Corzantes por ser mi modelo de fortaleza e integridad.

I dedicate this work to my parents, Dorita and Adrian, thank you for giving me the gift of life. Diane: thanks for instilling in me the passion and dedication to learn new things each day. To my brother Hardy for the college years we journeyed together and to my aunt Yoly for being my role model of resilience and integrity.

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Also, my sincerest gratitude goes to Dr. John Welsh for being the shining beacon of knowledge through my discovery journey in the field. Special thanks to Dr. Rhonda Epper, Dr. Myk Garn, and Dr. Douglas McCoy for their willingness to provide input for my study and their groundbreaking work in the field that served as the foundation for this study.

I could not have completed this study without the valuable support and assistance of Dr. Gale Rhodes, Mr. Greg Vittitow, Mr. Bob Reed, Dr. Darlene Williams, and Ms. Julia Parker who facilitated access to their institutions' distance learning policies. Infinite thanks for your time, support, and priceless contributions.

Lastly, I want to say thank you to the most important people in my life: Dorita, Adrian, Tita, Diane, Hardy, Yoly, Rubén, José María, and Mayra for your unconditional support and love. We did it!

ABSTRACT

DISTANCE EDUCATION POLICY: A STUDY OF THE SREB FACULTY SUPPORT POLICY CONSTRUCT AT FOUR VIRTUAL COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY CONSORTIA.

Kathleen A. MacKenzie

May 5, 2009

The present study has a three pronged purpose: one, describe how the faculty support policy construct developed by the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) exists at four Virtual Colleges and Universities Consortia (VCU). Two, describe how VCUs degree of centralization and emphasis on business practices influences the faculty support policy construct of their respective sampled institutions. Three, search for patterns in policy characteristics across the same four VCUs accounting for their degree of centralization and emphasis on business practices.

The study is among the first in-depth qualitative studies to apply SREB's faculty support policy construct to representative VCUs of the Epper and Garn taxonomy, delve into specific details of the faculty support policy construct proposed by SREB, and search for policy patterns among representative VCUs selected for the study. The study

provides much needed insight that is currently missing from the literature and that should assist university leaders, policy makers, and faculty in the administration of day-to-day activities at Virtual Colleges and Universities Consortia or academic collaborations.

The study design is a multiple-case study. The design facilitated obtaining better insight, description, and discovery of how the faculty support policy construct exists today at the selected VCUs, how the construct influences the operation of each VCU, and if patterns exist in faculty support characteristics among the four institutions. The design encouraged a high level and comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under study, distance learning policy, and the development of general theoretical statements. Data gathering techniques were semi-structured phone interviews and document analysis.

Study findings revealed that the SREB faculty support policy construct exists at the four sample institutions with very distinct levels of intensity. Findings also revealed that sampled VCUs degree of centralization and business practice influence some faculty support policies implemented at the sampled higher education institutions. Lastly, findings reveal that patterns exist across higher education institutions in terms of faculty support policies. While some patterns diverge from the Epper and Garn taxonomy most patterns are just expected and consistent across higher education institutions.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The primary goal of educational agents in schools, colleges, and universities is to advance and disseminate shared knowledge. The Internet is the instrument that can help disseminate and democratize intellectual capital (McMurtry, 1991). Internet technologies enable unprecedented instructional innovation and access to education (Graves, 1999). Technology helps bring like-minded people together, increase their knowledge of politics and public policy, and provide a plethora of enriching opportunities (Munitz, 2000) which in turn helps them become independent to think and act on their own (McMurtry, 1991).

The widespread availability of the Internet and the ever-increasing bandwidths for telephone lines allow the use of rich media over long distances (Herder, Subrahmanina, Talukdar, Turk, & Westerberg, 2002). The Internet allows humans to organize in communities that are homogenous in terms of intellectual interests and academic preparation and also allows for the advancement of common interests independent of place and time (Graves, 1999). Distance education is a means to link learners with one another through the use of information and communication technologies and offer educational opportunities to students who would not otherwise have access to enroll in courses (Baer, Bertrand, Borkowski, Brown, Brownell, & DeLauder, 2002).

O'Donoghue and Singh (2001) use the typical student who works full-time and encounters difficulties complying with face-to-face attendance requirements as an example of the typical student that distance education can help (as cited in O'Neill, Singh, & O'Donoghue, 2004). Distance education should be considered part of a college's mission and growth plans rather than a separate division or function because adult students who are not adequately served by traditional learning formats can benefit from new models of higher education such as distance education (Thor & Scarafioti, 2004).

The 2007 Sloan Survey of Online Learning revealed that student enrollments for online courses continue to grow at a faster pace than the overall higher education enrollments. All types of higher education institutions are experiencing substantial growth rates in the area of online learning (Allen & Seaman, 2007). Earlier studies such as the 2005 and 2002 Sloan Survey of Online Learning gave early hints of this upward trend. The 2005 Sloan study revealed that higher education institutions in the US offered a wide variety of courses and programs online, the number of core faculty teaching online courses was slightly higher than for face-to-face courses, there was an upward trend in considering online education as part of a school's long-term strategy, and the student participation rate exceeded the growth rate in the overall higher education student population (Allen & Seaman, 2005).

Waits and Lewis (2003) study provided national estimates on distance education at two-year and four-year Title IV eligible, degree-granting institutions and revealed that during the 2000-2001 academic year 56% of these institutions offered distance education courses for any level audience. Their study reported that about 90% of US public

institutions of higher education offered electronic distance learning in the 2000-2001 academic years.

Virtual institutions emerged when traditional organizations tried to maximize the benefits of the new information and communication technologies. These organizations formed flexible and dynamic networks that leverage business practices (Halaris, Kerridge, Bafoutsou, Mentzas, Kerridge, 2003). These institutions offer students a diverse and pluralist environment with access to different levels of culture and philosophic systems while enabling them to: (a) choose their professors regardless of the geographic distance that may separate them, (b) acquaint with different educational and learning systems, (c) improve their adjustability to different levels of culture and philosophy in the virtual university, (d) learn to adjust to change (Anastasiades, 2002).

Johnstone and Wolf (1999) found that various organizational arrangements to facilitate academic offerings emerged as the number of programs available through electronic technologies grew. To distinguish among the different organizational arrangements, they created their taxonomy that classifies institutions into one of seven different types based on their level of collaboration.

The seven types of organizational arrangements they articulated are: (a) virtual universities: institutions without a campus that grant academic degrees, (b) virtual university consortia: accredited academic institutions interlinked to supply centralized and coordinated coursework to students and with mutual articulation among member institutions, (c) academic services consortia: accredited academic institutions interlinked to supply centralized and coordinated coursework to students without mutual articulation among member institutions, (d) university information consortia, (e) virtual programs:

interlinked accredited academic institutions that do not offer centralized or coordinated services to students, (f) virtual certification institutions: grant certificates instead of academic credit, and (g) traditional accredited institutions with electronic courses: grant academic credit for courses however these do not lead to a degree.

Epper and Garn (2003) later used the term virtual colleges and universities or VCU to encompass distance learning consortia that comprise membership of the public higher education institutions (two year and/or four year) within a single system or state (p. 1). They added a second dimension to the Johnstone and Wolf taxonomy creating a revised and more representative one. Epper and Garn's taxonomy uses two dimensions to conceptualize VCUs' degree of centralization and degree of business practices. This study focused on institutions of the Virtual University Consortia type.

The idea of virtual universities emerged in 1997 with the institution of the Western Governors University. Six years later, there were 61 additional virtual institutions across the US (Epper & Garn, 2003). At most institutions, technology preceded policy. Because virtual universities introduce new pressures to existing institutional policies, institutions such as the Distance Learning Policy Laboratory (DLPL) emerged to support state technology initiatives by removing barriers through policymaking (Chaloux & Mingle, 2002).

The rapid explosion of Internet technologies used by faculty, staff, and student bodies require general support models for instructional technology, particularly to help faculty use online communication tools and online resources to achieve higher education goals of the instructional mission (Graves, 1999, p96). Young (2004) asserts that a poorly supported technology is worse than no technology at all (as cited on Trinkle, 2005).

Appropriate support is essential to guarantee that faculty and staff can fulfill their work duties as intended (Trinkle, 2005). Well-supported technology that is focused on learning helps integrate teaching and learning with institutions' mission (Cloete, 2001). Internet technologies require development services for faculty and an infrastructure that enables higher education institutions to use technology in an effective and affordable manner (Graves, 1999).

Problem Statement

Distance education can operate at multiple levels: global, international, national, and institutional. Policies exist at each level and across multiple sectors and influence the development of distance education in general. The purpose of these policies is to increase the access to education and training opportunities with the end goal of ensuring economic progress, stability, and democracy (Farnes, 2000). Unfortunately, frequently these policies are implemented without first being scrutinized (Nelson, 1999). Anecdotal evidence suggests that policies emerge or change when there is a need to work-around obstacles that may be hindering progress (Berge, 1998).

Legislators control and promote distance learning policies at the global level. At the international level, organizations such as the International Council for Open and Distance Education (ICDE), the Asian Association of Open Universities (AAOU), the European Association of Distance Education Universities (EADTU), and the Consorcio-Red de Educación a Distancia in Latin America (CREAD) promote and support policies for distance education. At the country level, national legislation and government policy shape distance education, remove barriers that may interfere with its progress, support the implementation of new distance education systems, and establish the boundaries for state

control in distance education. In the US and Canada each state develops its own distance education policies. Higher education institutions in the US and Canada are likely to have enough autonomy and self-determination to select and implement distance education policies that align with their distance learning strategies (Farnes, 2000).

Distance education policy influences distance education in terms of definition, status, reputation, and funding. A narrow definition can hurt the development of different forms of distance education and a broad one can make it difficult to differentiate among each form. A policy can declare the status of distance education to be equivalent to conventional education or simply a means of delivery. Legislation can determine the reputation of degrees awarded through distance education by either supporting the perception that distance education equates lower academic standards or that distance education is as good as traditionally delivered education. Legislation dictates the amount of funding governments allocate for institutions to support their distance education efforts (Farnes, 2000).

Universities' distance education policies are critical lenses through which we can understand institutions' distance education goals and intentions. Policies facilitate effective integrations of distance education programs into the already existing infrastructure of student populations, teaching methods, and resources. Policies can either facilitate or hinder the integration of distance education into traditional systems (Irele, 2005). Limited studies are investigating the effectiveness of policies or mechanisms for making policies at the national, state, or institutional levels.

Purpose of the Study

First, the study intends to clearly depict how the faculty support policy construct developed by the Southern Regional Education Board exists at Virtual Colleges and Universities Consortia without accounting for the institution's degree of centralization and emphasis on business practices. Second, the study applies SREB's faculty support policy construct to four representative Virtual Colleges and Universities Consortia (VCU) of the Epper & Garn taxonomy and uses findings to explain how the faculty support policy construct influences the operation of each representative VCU. Third, the study uses findings to discover the existence of patterns in policy characteristics across the four representative institutions. The Epper and Garn taxonomy measures virtual institutions' degree of centralization and emphasis on business practices and classifies them into one of four types. The virtual universities selected for the study are member institutions of the Southern Regional Education Board.

Significance of the study

The study is significant for multiple reasons. First, the study is among the first qualitative studies that apply the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) faculty support policy construct to representative VCUs of the Epper and Garn taxonomy. Very little information exists regarding state or system-level consortia hosting institutions that offer distance learning programs (Epper & Garn, 2003). The study delves into specific details of the faculty support policy construct proposed by SREB and intends to find policy patterns among representative VCUs in each quadrant of the Epper and Garn taxonomy.

Third, the study provides a systematic qualitative analysis of the faculty support policy construct at each representative VCU of the Epper and Garn taxonomy. The qualitative nature of the study involves an in-depth study of the faculty support policy construct at each representative VCU in order to find out how the construct came into existence at each particular institution. Fourth, the study findings provide a myriad of research possibilities for quantitative researchers in terms of deriving inferences, predictions, and relationships between VCUs and the SREBs faculty support policy construct (Ragin, Nagel, and White, 2003). Fifth, study findings provide faculty, academic administrators, and policy makers with information that can help them develop a better understanding of the faculty support policy construct and how it influences the operation of representative VCUs.

Sixth, the study provides additional insight into the policy constructs that should be implemented at Virtual Colleges and Universities Consortia based on their degree of centralization and emphasis on business practices. This is much needed insight that is currently missing from the literature and that will assist university leaders, policy makers, and faculty in the administration of day-to-day activities at Virtual Colleges and Universities Consortia or academic collaborations.

Theoretical Framework

Higher Education and Distance Education

Changes taking place in the higher education industry are attributed to new technologies, demographic changes, rising costs, and changes in the workforce learning needs. Institutions have the option to continue participating in segments where they have a competitive advantage and withdraw from those where they are not competitive or they

could choose to do the opposite for instance, entering the distance learning market and embracing new technologies, delivery systems, and customer needs paradigms (Collis, n.d.).

Higher education administrators' choice to exclude their institutions from the distance education market translates into less funding for their institutions (McMurtry, 1991). This is because economic development interests drive states' legislative policy and funding agendas (Ruppert, 1997). One could infer the reason for this effect is that societies of people who are competent in processing information and are able to transform it into knowledge that is applicable to work and everyday life have an economic advantage over those who are not (UNESCO, 2002). For this reason, business leaders pressure business-supported governments to compel universities to make fundamental changes to their institutions (McMurtry, 1991; Munitz, 2000).

State legislators expect economic development results from higher education institutions. Their perception is that higher education must fulfill three key roles: (a) strengthen and diversify the state economy, (b) train their workforce with valuable skills that allows them to earn high wages, and (c) encourage high levels of educational attainment. Their interest in economic development drives their states' legislative policy and funding agendas. Their top challenges in the legislative priorities list are improving higher education responsiveness to employers, students, and public in general and accommodating the changing demands for improved access to educational opportunities (Ruppert, 1997).

The relationship among distance education and traditional education has always been unclear (Irele, 2005). Distance education should be considered part of colleges'

mission and growth rather than a separate division or function (Thor & Scarafiotti, 2004). Distance delivered education must find a way to fit in the fixed structures and conventions of traditional education. The tension that emerges between distance education and traditional higher education as an event that forces the former to come to terms with fixed academic structures and conventions and to be part of institutions that are reluctant to change and have limited flexibility. The purpose of distance education should be to innovate and digitize the mission and sense of direction of higher education institutions in order to increase their versatility for meeting the requirements of a rapidly changing society (as cited in Irele, 2005).

According to Brown and Dugid (1996), the implicit goal of American higher education institutions is to deliver graduates who know academic facts, people, and social strategies for dealing with the world. Parents pay high fees for good schools and students and faculty compete to get into certain campuses because the academic experience helps people find their way through life after university. The core competency of higher education institutions as they exist today is to enable students to develop knowledge within intricate and robust networks and communities. For the same reason they believe that education delivered at a distance lacks personal interactions on a range of implicit and peripheral forms of communication that are the foundation of learning at all levels.

American higher education institutions will not benefit much from erecting walls and opposing distance education efforts. As the world gets flat, the contexts in which individuals operate shift from a background-based world to a talent-based world. In a talent-based world, individuals learn and relate with one another on the basis of talent. An upgraded American higher education system that embraces distance education will bring

more benefits to citizens while helping them compete for the new jobs in a flat market (Friedman, 2006). Policy and legislation are key components in this reform because they dictate the requirements for operation of distance education initiatives (Farnes, 2000).

Virtual Universities

Almost each state in the United States has a virtual university initiative established or in the works (Twigg, 2003a). Epper and Garn (2003) operationalized the definition of Virtual Colleges and Universities (VCUs) as initiatives made up of public higher education institutions, two and/or four year, within a single system or state. These institutions exist to provide educational opportunities that help develop a better-educated workforce, improve workers' personal prosperity, and strengthen states' economy.

Virtual institutions are dynamic alliances among different higher education entities with the common goal of complementing competencies and delivering a product or service to the market as one entity.

The concept of virtual universities is relatively new. The idea emerged in the mid to late 1990s and was part of the technology boom. These institutions exist in relatively new technology. Consequently, state, system, and institutional leaders have little research that can help them determine the feasibility of creating or joining multi-campus virtual universities and compare these against benchmarks to judge their success. Virtual institutions emerged when traditional organizations tried to maximize the benefits of the new information and communication technologies. These institutions constitute flexible and dynamic networks that make the best use of business opportunities (Epper & Garn, 2003).

McCoy (2003) described the multiple classification strategies for VCUs. Hurst's taxonomy looks at governance structure. Berge's taxonomy looks at interstate membership, accreditation, brokering, and private industry involvement. Smith's taxonomy looks at course brokers, collaborators, or wholesale purchasers. Johnstone and Wolf's taxonomy looks at the different ways in which colleges and universities work together in an electronic environment. Their taxonomy classifies VCUs on a collaboration continuum that ranges from highly distributed to independent (Johnstone & Wolf, 1999). Epper and Garn (2003) built upon the Johnstone and Wolf taxonomy to come up with their own. Their attempt is to accurately represent current VCUs structures and behaviors. Their taxonomy views VCUs from two dimensions: degree of collaboration and degree to which they implement business practices.

The Epper and Garn Taxonomy of Virtual College and University Consortia

Epper and Garn's (2003) taxonomy consists of four VCU model types: Central Agency, Distributed Agency, Central Enterprise, and Distributed Enterprise. See appendix H for a visual representation of the taxonomy. The distributed models display less formal management authority because they are responsible for more services. The enterprise models tend to control decisions about quality, standardization, scalability, and measurement more than its non-enterprise counterparts.

The distributed agency model has minimal control over services other than the electronic catalog. The Oregon Network for Education is good example of a decentralized model. The distributed enterprise model also provides a limited number of services however, these institutions score high in business practices such as self-

sustainability, quality control, performance measurement, standardization, and benchmarking. The Louisiana Board of Regents Electronic Campus is a good example.

The central agency model provides direct services to students and formal articulation among campuses. These institutions lead technology initiatives, manage distributed and centralized resources, and focus on achieving goals that increase the efficiency of higher education such as technology and shared infrastructure. The Ohio Learning Network is a good example. The central enterprise model exercises stronger management control over their operations than any of its counterparts. These institutions seek financial stability that allows them to operate regardless of state and system allocations. The Kentucky Virtual University is a good example of this model type. See figure 1 for a visual representation of the taxonomy.

The day-to-day operations of these virtual entities rely on policy frameworks for guiding its different policy areas, activities, and processes. Comparing and contrasting policy elements can help find differences and similarities among virtual institutions (McCoy, 2003). Berge's (1998) study of policy frameworks is among the early works in the subject. His framework consists of eight constructs: (a) private industry in higher education, (b) competency-based vs. seat-time credit, (c) university governance and faculty labor issues, (d) accreditation, (e) education vs. training, (f) state residency and funding, and (g) consumerism in education.

Figure 1. Epper & Garn Taxonomy. Business practice is along the X axis and level of centralization along the Y axis.

Gellman-Danley and Fetzner (1998) published their policy framework geared to assist with policy issues in distance education. Their framework consists of seven constructs: (a) academic, (b) fiscal, (c) geographic, (d) governance, (e) labor-management, (f) legal, and (g) student support services. Berg (1998) added two more constructs to Gellman-Danley and Fetzner's framework: (a) technical and (b) cultural. King, Nugent, Russell, Eich, and Lacy (2000) published a revised policy framework that reflects the most significant areas in distance education that are in need of policies. Their framework consists of seven constructs: (a) academic; (b) governance, administration,

and fiscal; (c) faculty, (d) legal, (e) student support services, (f) technical, and (g) cultural.

In 2001, the Distance Learning Policy Laboratory, a division of the Southern Regional Education Board, published seven key policy issues or frameworks along with their respective recommendations for colleges and universities in the southern states.

The Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) and the Distance Learning Policy Laboratory (DLPL)

SREB is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization that works with leaders and policy-makers from 16 member states improving education from pre-K through postsecondary. States' governors and legislators funded the organization in the middle of the 20th century because southern states were falling behind in achieving educational and economic goals in comparison to the rest of the nation. SREB is the first educational organization where members work together to achieve the common goal of improving the region's economy and its people (Chaloux & Mingle, 2002).

President Franklin D. Roosevelt labeled the South as the nation's No. 1 economic problem. The South was considered to be poor because it lacked enough educated citizens validating the positive relationship between states prosperity and the education level of its citizens. Today, parts of the South are achieving economic progress while diminishing the poverty and culture of low expectations characteristic to the region. This achievement is partially attributed to the expertise and vision SREB leaders deliver (Barnes et al., 2002).

According to the Southern Regional Education Board (n.d.), in 1999, the Distance Learning Policy Laboratory (DLPL) began operations; its goal is to support SREB's

technology initiatives by focusing on reducing significant policy barriers in distance learning in SREB states. The DLPL works closely with the Electronic Campus and member states to expand postsecondary distance-learning opportunities for residents of those states. A limited number of studies are trying to find what are the effective policies or mechanisms for making policy at the different levels (Nelson, 1999). The DLPL compiled a series of reports outlining the policy issues associated with distance learning and required strategic policy changes that would help increase access to quality and affordable education.

These policy reports serve a dual purpose; one, they outline policy issues associated with distance learning and two, encourage strategic policy change to increase access to quality and affordable education. According to Moore (2003) research in policy is the most difficult and needed area of research. DLPL policy staff and appointed subcommittees drafted a report series around the seven validated federal, state, and institutional policy areas: (a) financial aid, (b) student services, (c) funding, (d) quality assurance, (e) academic transfer, (f) access to technology and support, and (g) technology support for faculty. See figure 2 for a visual representation of the policy areas.

The Seven DLPL Policy Constructs:

1. Financial aid: distance learners have little access to billions of dollars available in financial aid. Primarily because financial aid policies, structures, and procedures are over 40 years old and often exist to limit aid for students who are not traditional age, enrolled full-time, or learning on-campus (Andes et al., 2002).
2. Student services: refer to the traditional campus based services such as tuition fees, bookstore purchases, financial aid, admission, registration, library, advising, career

counseling, and testing. These services need to be available to learners whose physical distance prevents them from traveling to campus on a regular basis. Services such as technology and Internet navigation training need to be part of the services offered to distance learners (Barden et al., 2002).

Figure 2. Seven validated federal, state, and institutional policy areas according to the Distance Learning Policy Laboratory.

3. Fiscal: state and system financing policies can advance or hinder distance learning. The construct deals with issues pertaining to tuition, fees, and charges; technology and change over process funding methods; accounting methods to manage cost and

resources; implementation of ecommerce functions throughout fundamental business processes of education (Bowes et al., 2002).

4. Quality assurance: examines the challenges state and higher education quality review processes face in a distance learning environment. Most quality standards including accreditation are tied to traditional standards of excellence and assume an on-campus presence. These standards need to be updated to account for the fundamental goals of student access and innovation while still accounting for traditional consumer protection functions (Allen et al., 2002).
5. Academic transfer: educational requirements such as prerequisites and academic major are different across higher education institutions. These differences aggravate the course credit transfer process for all students particularly of those leveraging anytime/anywhere learning. Higher education institutions offering anytime/anywhere learning must arrive to a consensus that facilitates articulation and transfer of academic credits (Bradley et al., 2002).
6. Access to technology and support: construct deals with the digital divide phenomenon that describes the correlation that exists between advances in technology and the social and economic divisions at the regional, national, and global levels. The interaction of three factors: (a) rate of computer ownership and Internet access, (b) technology training and support, and (c) financial resources determines the speed and distance in which the “haves” can outpace the “have nots” (Baker et al., 2001).
7. Faculty support: faculty role as teachers in a distance learning environment is critical. The construct encompasses issues such as using technology to improve the process effectiveness of teaching and learning, supporting faculty roles in an e-learning

environment while developing compensation and incentive structures for the new roles, and establishing copyright policies that allow access to information yet warrants owners with intellectual property rights (Baker et al., 2001).

The Distance Learning Policy Laboratory (DLPL) Faculty Support Policy Construct

According to Baker et al., (2001) providing students with a technology-based education lowers students' opportunity costs and increases their access to education. The role of faculty in a technology-rich environment is to guide, inspire, and motivate students to make sense of vast amounts of complex information while providing an ethical and analytical framework through which students apply knowledge in the future. The aim of the DLPL faculty policy construct is to support faculty in an e-learning environment, develop compensation and incentives structures that support the new roles, and establish policies that allow access to information while protecting intellectual property rights of content owners. The nine recommendations formulated by the DLPL faculty support sub-committee intend to achieve the actions above. See figure 3 for the visual representation of the factors that make up the construct.

Recommendations encompass the aspects below.

1. **Development and Support Structures:** refers to the state and institutional commitment to devise mechanisms through which faculty can improve their productivity and effectiveness as teachers. A 1998 best practices in faculty development study conducted by the American Productivity and Quality Center and the State Higher Education Officers found that strong programs had the following elements: a strong instructional technology plan for the institution; significant investments in technology infrastructure; senior leadership support for using technology in teaching; faculty

support in terms of funding, release time, technical support, computer upgrades, and professional development.

Figure 3. Nine recommendations of the faculty support construct according to the Distance Learning Policy Laboratory

2. Faculty application of technology in traditional and virtual classrooms: refers to the technology component affecting all faculty regardless of delivery mode. Presently, distance learning technology influences on-campus programs. In the future, all courses will be part of an electronic network that will force all faculty to operate in a distributed learning environment.

3. Strong state and institutional evaluation activities coupled with reformed accreditation standards and processes that account for e-learning structures: refers to evaluation activities aimed at uncovering pedagogical strategies and technical tools for enhancing learning in particular subject matters and specific populations; focused on the information literacy skills needed in the modern workplace; measuring completion rate of distance learning students; and tracking teaching and learning effectiveness from the students' perspective. Accreditation standards and processes refer to the integrity of degrees granted and level of coherence among virtual universities.
4. Encourage activities that achieve economies of scale and qualitative improvements: endorses cooperative faculty development initiatives and cooperative degree programs across institutions. Past experience showed the three prerequisites for the establishment of effective consortia: (a) a shared sense of collective benefit on the part of all partners, (b) a coordinating structure capable of sustaining and advancing the consortium's work along with a solid plan, and (c) explicit expense and revenue sharing agreements.
5. Team approach to instructional design: addresses the unbundling of faculty functions. The online environment facilitates economies of scale and qualitative improvements through standardization. The teaching and learning process consists of related but distinct functions carried out by different members of an instructional team comprised of instructional designer, graphic/interface designer, technical support personnel, content expert, direct instructor, information resource personnel, mentor/tutor, and

assessor. This approach affects the one-size-fits-all assumptions of current tenure and promotion policies.

6. Hiring, promotion, and tenure incentives in exchange for the creation and effective use of digital learning materials: addresses institutions and state systems role in recognizing, rewarding, and supporting faculty who are willing to invest time, creativity, and effort incorporating technology into their teaching.
7. Structures capable of managing change to develop, deliver, and sustain e-learning: endorses virtual institutions with explicit state support that are part of a statewide coordinating and governing board structure capable of channeling state support to state priorities through individual faculty and institutions. Also, e-learning businesses such as online enablers capable of delivering superior products than university in-house staff with significant cost savings; college portals enabling colleges to link with students through virtual campuses; digital content providers positioned to unbundle content and license learning objects.
8. Policies addressing courses and materials ownership: encourages institutions to have written guidelines on course ownership and course materials and to communicate these prior to any major e-learning endeavor. Revenue sharing agreements between institutions and faculty are preferable over institutional ownership. Either arrangement is appropriate only in cases where institutions make substantial contributions to the creation of course materials. Past experience shows that public institutions are more likely to place the ownership of scholarly work in the hands of faculty members than private ones.

9. Financial rewards from commercialization of course materials: suggests that the same commercial licensing agreements benefiting institutions as a whole, departments, and faculty inventors and researchers may be appropriate in the digital learning context. Because frequently digital learning is the product of a team effort, revenue sharing may be a viable profit sharing strategy in an e-learning context.

Institutional leaders have the fundamental responsibility to take care of faculty issues. In an e-learning context, the responsibility is the same only broader. The faculty support construct recognizes the value of teaching and the importance of encouraging and preparing faculty to best serve students.

The four virtual colleges and universities representative of the Epper & Garn taxonomy are as follow: (a) Mississippi Virtual Community College, (b) Florida Distance Learning Consortium, (c) Louisiana Board of Regents Electronic Campus, and (d) Kentucky Virtual University. See figure 4 for a visual representation of the four virtual institutions used in this study that are representative of each quadrant of the Epper and Garn taxonomy.

Figure 4. SREB member virtual institutions representative of each quadrant of the Epper and Garn taxonomy.

The Mississippi Virtual Community College (MSVCC)

According to the Mississippi VCC (2003) site, MSVCC provides educational opportunities to individuals living within the various community and junior college districts in the Mississippi area and beyond. The institution intends to provide access to instructional offerings through advanced technologies to individuals who cannot attend the community and junior college offerings via traditional means and individuals seeking alternative educational delivery systems. Mississippi identified the need to provide educational opportunities to individuals who cannot physically attend a traditional classroom and devised a way to mitigate the need through distance learning. The

initiative went live in January 2000. Because MSVCC is a consortium of colleges it is not eligible for accreditation. All participating colleges are accredited by their national and/or regional accrediting agency.

This institution operates as a Distributed Agency type providing a limited number of services and implementing business practices such as self-sustainability, quality control, performance measurement, standardization, and benchmarking. MSVCC is a consortium of 14 of Mississippi's community colleges that gives students the flexibility to take courses from multiple community colleges in the Mississippi area. Students enroll at a local or host community college. The host college provides a full slate of student services, including academic advice and counseling, financial aid, and learning resources. The remote college provides the course instruction and the host college awards the academic credit. Each MSVCC college actively pursues faculty training and provides varied instructional resources to instructors

Florida Distance Learning Consortium (FDLC)

According to the Florida Distance Learning Consortium (2007) site, the Consortium provides coordination among Florida's colleges and universities in the development, delivery, marketing, and acquisition of distance learning instruction and infrastructure. The institution supports educational entities in the state of Florida fulfill their education mission by coordinating the establishment of the technology enhanced educational delivery system. This system uses instructional technology to assure the maximum number of Florida residents has access to education and helps mitigate distance, time, and place barriers.

This institution is representative of the central agency model because it provides direct services to students, formal articulation among campuses, leads technology initiatives, manages distributed and centralized resources, and focuses on achieving goals that increase the efficiency of higher education such as technology and shared infrastructure (Epper & Garn, 2003).

The Florida Distance Learning Consortium provides an online course catalog that contains courses and programs offered via distance learning by Florida's community colleges and universities. The Consortium consists of 28 community colleges, 27 independent colleges and universities, and 11 state universities. Annually, the consortium licenses learning management systems, telecourses, software, and support services at substantial savings to participating institutions and partners with vendors and providers that can potentially benefit member students and educational institutions.

The Florida Distance Learning Consortium serves as an advisory committee to the State Board of Education and the Florida Board of Governors. The Consortium receives fiscal and operational support from Tallahassee Community College. Membership in the Consortium is open to all public or private school districts, colleges and universities recognized by Florida's State Board of Education and accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools.

The Louisiana Board of Regents Electronic Campus (LBREC)

According to the LBREC (2005) site, the Louisiana electronic campus gives access to postsecondary education to state's citizens. The campus went live in 1998 and is part of the Southern Regional Education Board electronic campus. Its goal is to complement and enhance Louisiana's existing higher education resources. The campus

encourages collaborations between Louisiana educational institutions and business, government, and the surrounding community. Also, the Louisiana campus provides cost-effective service through cooperative development, invests in and supports the development of a telecommunications infrastructure, and minimizes and streamlines policies for reviewing and approving flexible degree programs.

The Louisiana Electronic campus operates under a distributed enterprise model, which means that it provides a limited number of services. This type of institution scores high in business practices such as self-sustainability, quality control, performance measurement, standardization, and benchmarking (Epper & Garn, 2003).

Kentucky Virtual Campus (KYVC)

According to the Kentucky Virtual University (2003) site, Kentucky citizens have access to quality college credits, professional development opportunities, and supplemental studies through the KYVC. The campus' mission is to serve as a statewide advocate for access to learning through technology, to organize partners to use resources effectively, and a catalyst for innovation and excellence in digital learning.

Great detail of the campus design came from House Bill 1 as part of the overall Postsecondary Education Reform Act of 1997. The original mission of KYVC reads: "The Commonwealth Virtual College shall make the academic programs available to the citizens of the Commonwealth through the use of modern methods of communications and information dissemination as determined by the Council on Postsecondary Education after consideration of the recommendations of the Distance Learning Advisory Committee..."

KYVC operates under a central enterprise model exercising stronger management control over their operations. The institution seeks financial stability that allows it to operate regardless of state and system allocations (Epper & Garn, 2003). The virtual university provides key services that support online instruction of its postsecondary and state agency partners as well as citizens of Kentucky. Initially, KYVC served Kentucky's learners through partnerships with postsecondary education institutions and state agencies. As postsecondary institutions developed their own technology infrastructure to deliver distance learning, the campus' role changed to serve state agencies as well.

Research Questions

This study examines the faculty technology support policies of four Virtual Colleges and Universities (VCU) Consortia. Each selected institution is representative of the Epper and Garn taxonomy –Distributed Agency Model, Distributed Enterprise Model, Central Agency Model, and Central Enterprise Model. The institutions under study are: The Mississippi Virtual Community College, Louisiana Board of Regents, Florida Distance Learning Consortium, and the Kentucky Virtual University. The Southern Regional Education Board policy framework served for the analysis across institutions.

Research questions are as follow:

1. In the Virtual Colleges and Universities Consortia under investigation, how does the faculty support policy construct exist today?
2. In the Virtual Colleges and Universities Consortia under investigation, how has the operation of each VCU influenced the respective institutions' faculty support policy construct?

3. Are there any patterns in faculty support policy characteristics across the four institutions representative VCUs of the Epper and Garn taxonomy?

Assumptions and Limitations

The selection of representative Virtual Colleges and Universities Consortia came from the Epper and Garn study. Their classification of VCUs was taken at face value. The lack of similar studies limited the ability to compare the validity of their taxonomy against others. Similarly, the absence of similar studies reduces the ability to cross-validate the present study findings against the findings from other studies.

The collection process of policy documents was exhaustive and the researcher believes collected all pertinent documents from the participating institutions. However, stakeholders from each participating institution facilitated the data collection process consequently, the researcher cannot assert that all pertinent policy documents were reviewed (McCoy, 2003).

The study makes several assumptions. First, the representative Virtual Colleges and Universities Consortia selected for the study remain representative of each quadrant of the Epper and Garn taxonomy. Second, the SREB faculty support policy framework remains applicable and well thought-out for the selected Southern Virtual Colleges and Universities Consortia.

Operational Definitions and Terms

In an effort to avoid misinterpretations, the following list defines the most salient terms used throughout the study.

Distance Education

The science of teaching and education arrangement in which the learner and teacher are separated by space or geography and time (Williams, Paprock, & Covington, 1999).

Epper and Garn VCU Taxonomy

Their taxonomy uses two dimensions to conceptualize VCUs degree of centralization and degree of business practices. The degree of centralization derives from the Johnstone and Wolf 1999 taxonomy which classifies VCUs on degree of collaboration. The business practice dimension classifies VCUs by the degree to which they were implementing business practices (Epper & Garn, 2003).

Faculty support policy construct

The construct aims to achieve three goals (a) use technology to improve the effectiveness of the teaching and learning process, (b) support new roles for faculty in an e-learning environment and develop appropriate compensation and incentive structures to accompany those new roles, and (c) establish equitable policies that allow widespread access to information resources while sustaining the intellectual property rights for content owners to their intellectual property (Baker et al., 2001).

Internet

The definition crafted by the Federal Networking Council (1995) for the word "Internet" is: a global information system that (a) is logically linked together by a globally unique address space based on the Internet Protocol (IP); (b) is able to support communications using the Transmission Control Protocol/Internet Protocol (TCP/IP)

suite; and (c) provides, uses or makes accessible, either publicly or privately, high level services layered on the communications and related infrastructure described earlier.

Online Learning

Online courses are those in which at least 80% of the course content is delivered online (Allen & Seaman, 2007).

Policy

Webster's dictionary defines the term as a definite course or method of action selected from among alternatives and in the light of given conditions to guide and, usually, to determine present and future decisions (Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary, 2007).

Policy Analysis

This type of analysis helps determine which of various alternative policies will most likely achieve a given set of goals in light of the relations between the policies and the goals. The two primary methods of policy analysis are analytical and descriptive and prescriptive (Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary, 2007).

Qualitative research

Traditionally used in the social sciences. This type of research involves in-depth, case oriented study of a small number of cases, including the single case study. One of the primary characteristics of qualitative research is the detail knowledge of specific cases that it contains. The ultimate goal of such detail is to help explain how events happen and present facts in a manner that are understandable (Ragin, Nagel, & White, 2003).

Virtual College/University Consortia (VCU)

The term Virtual College/University refers to single system or state initiatives. These initiatives comprise membership of the public higher education institutions (two year and/or four year). The term “Virtual College/University Consortia” refers to the study of consortial, multi-institutional VCU initiatives (Epper & Garn, 2003).

Delimitation of the Study

The purpose of this section is to delimit the scope and focus of the study by outlining what the study does not do. This study does not address the pedagogical soundness of distance education or specific technologies used to deliver it. Also, the study does not investigate students’ characteristics, motivations, and persistence rates in distance education. The study investigates the policies of four state-level institutions in the United States with respect to faculty technology support.

Summary

Technological advances are creating mechanisms that facilitate bringing learning to people via virtual colleges and universities. Most virtual university and college consortia emerged without a clear and specific roadmap outlining critical processes. Recent studies are beginning to articulate structures that delineate the operations of virtual consortia. This study scrapes the top of the iceberg as it takes a closer look at the policy construct regarding technological support for faculty in four southern states in the US.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

The transforming power of digital connections is shaping our future (Immelt, 2008). The Internet is global, fast, expands rapidly, and is connecting people around the world. In 2004, Nielsen Netratings estimated that more than 250 million people were using the Internet (Amiel, 2006). The medium allows transmitting information in real-time in an online mode. For education, the Internet is enabling individuals to access knowledge (Kerrey et al., 2000). For instance, higher education institutions are making actual lectures publicly available, attracting millions of visitors on a monthly basis (Chaker, 2007). Virtual environments foster discussions among people in different geographic locations (Yazdani & Bligh, 1997), guarantee diversity and pluralism along with access to different levels of culture and philosophic systems (Anastasiades, 2002).

Colleges are experiencing an influx of older, part-time students seeking to upgrade their skills to succeed in a knowledge society while corporations are dealing with shortages of skilled workers. The Internet allows universities and colleges to bring knowledge to students instead of students to knowledge (Kerrey, et al., 2000). The medium supports the modern education trend of integrating information technologies, computer hardware systems, and communication tools to support educational professionals in remote teaching (Shih et al., 2003). The Internet empowers society to

school the illiterate, bring job training to the unskilled, open a universe of wondrous images and knowledge to all students, and enrich the understanding of the lifelong learner (Kerrey, et al., 2000). According to O'Neill, Singh, & O'Donoghue (2004) for many people, education is the means for achieving a better life.

The US Department of Education (2007) admits that having a college education is a necessity in today's competitive economy: 90% of the fastest-growing jobs require postsecondary education or training. According to Epper and Garn (2003) growing concerns of state and educational system leaders are the provision of educational opportunities that will result in a better-educated workforce, personal prosperity for citizens, and a strong economy for the state. Governors and state legislators are looking at public universities for help with issues such as on the job training, teacher preparation, research on key policy issues, workforce development, and undergraduate instruction (Coble, 2001).

Education and training are the nation's second largest expenditure, behind healthcare. In the year 2000, the education market represented 9% of the U.S. gross domestic product (Kerrey, et al., 2000). For that reason, state legislators need economic development results from higher education. For legislators, higher education should achieve three key goals: (a) strengthen and diversify state's economy, (b) train state's workforce with valuable skills that qualifies them to earn high wages, and (c) increase the overall educational attainment of the state's population. These interests in economic development drive legislative policy and funding agendas (Ruppert, 1997).

Distance education is a potential solution capable of increasing access to education and fostering economic development across states. State leaders believe

distance education makes financial sense and support its initiatives as long as these strengthen the state's economy, improve workforce knowledge, and enhance the personal prosperity of its citizens (Epper & Garn, 2003).

New technologies, demographic changes, rising costs, and changes in the workforce learning needs will drive changes in the higher education industry. Michael Porter's five forces approach reviews the multiple drivers of change in industries. These forces help determine the profitability and shape the conduct of competition within specific industries (Collins, n.d). Driving forces in the higher education industry are state higher education budget cuts, market demands, changing job market, and competition (Oblinger, 2001; Epper & Garn, 2003; Nicholls, Harris, Morgan, Clarke, Sims, 1995).

A product focused strategy is not uncommon in traditional higher education institutions where institutions decide what learning to deliver to students. Industry's driving forces are pushing traditional higher education institutions to opt for a more customer-focused strategy (Driscoll & Wicks, 1998) where students dictate what type of learning they want. This type of strategy presents both benefits and threats. Among the benefits are high student retention rate and process reduction in the education cycle time (Oblinger, 2001). Potential threats are: commercialization of education and overall poor quality (Harvey, 1996; Driscoll & Wicks, 1998).

Distance education policies exist at multiple levels: global, international, national, institutional, and across multiple sectors. These policies influence the development of distance education in general. Their purpose is to increase access to education and training opportunities with the end goal of ensuring economic progress, stability, and democracy (Farnes, 2000). Unfortunately, frequently these policies are implemented

without first being scrutinized. Often times, policy development and planning receive little attention (Nelson, 1999).

This fact can be problematic considering that distance education policy influences distance education in terms of definition, status, reputation, and funding (Farnes, 2000). Universities' distance education policies are critical lenses through which we can understand institutions' distance education goals and intentions. Limited studies are investigating the effectiveness of distance education policies or mechanisms for making policies at the national, state, or institutional levels. This study applies the faculty support policy construct published by the Southern Regional Education Board to four representative Virtual Colleges and Universities Consortia of the Epper and Garn taxonomy. The goal is to scrutinize how the construct exists at each VCU and how it influences the operation of each representative VCU.

The body of knowledge contained in this literature review served as the basis for the present study. The literature review is organized as follows: (a) distance education (b) distance education in postsecondary education (c) review of public policy vis-à-vis distance higher education (d) review of business concepts applied to distance higher education.

Distance Education

Distance education is blind to ethnicity, gender, and age. Pascopella (2003) defined distance education as the teaching and education arrangement in which the learner and teacher are separated by geography and time. Correspondence study is an early form of distance education and can be traced back to the early 1700s. In 1972, due to the proliferation of educational practices around correspondence study, the

International Council for Correspondence Education coined the practice with the term Distance Education (Williams, Paprock, & Covington, 1999). Forms of distance education are educational television and radio systems, multimedia, and Internet-based systems (UNESCO, 2002).

During the twentieth century, the availability of tools for remote teaching and education increased remarkably, consequently the use of distance education for delivering training to public and private entities gained greater popularity. For example, federal government entities conduct numerous educational and training endeavors in thousands of offices across the US, Hawaii, and its territories (Banas & Emory, 1998). Another great example emerged from the latest political changes across Central and Eastern Europe that fostered an environment in which citizens from these regions could leverage distance education to learn to speak multiple languages, acquire skills for new jobs, and adapt to new political systems (Farnes, 2000).

For learners, distance education is a means for accessing learning and balancing work and education responsibilities. For employers, distance education is a way of offering high quality and cost effective professional development opportunities in the workplace through which they can upgrade employees' skills and create a learning culture. For governments, distance education is a medium through which they can reach audiences with limited access to conventional education or training, ensure there is a connection between educational institutions' curricula and emerging networks and information resources, and a medium for promoting innovation and opportunities for lifelong learning (UNESCO, 2002).

Characteristics of distance education are: separates teacher and learner during at least a majority of each instructional process; uses technology to unite teacher and learner and carry course content; provides two-way communication between teacher, tutor, or educational agency and learner; and can be asynchronous or synchronous. The most salient benefits are increased student enrollment, improved recruiting process of students in previously unreachable areas, scalability, and enhanced public access (Zirkle, 2002).

Access can create endless opportunities for groups and individuals who have traditionally been underserved by educational providers. Presently institutional, organizational, and government distance education committees experience external pressures to improve the access to learning opportunities. Learners ask for increased flexibility in class scheduling, location of courses, and method of instruction, and distance education enables it (Kerrey, et al., 2000; UNESCO, 2002).

The Distance Education and Training Council (2007), a U.S. institution that fosters and preserves high quality, educationally sound, and widely accepted distance education, surveyed its 67 accredited members. The survey revealed that among the 40 member degree granting institutions the predominant method to deliver distance courses is through the Web. The number of students enrolled in 2006 Associate degree programs was 83,284, for Bachelor's degree programs was 23,431, for Master's degree programs was 9,027, and 1,750 for Doctoral degree programs. On average, institutions offered 59 DE courses. At the time of enrollment, 90% of students had jobs and 99% had access to the Internet. The average graduate rate was 66%. Seventeen percent of instructors are full-time and 53% have doctoral degrees.

Surveyed institutions agree that there is a largely untapped international demand for American degrees, which can be satisfied through distance education. Competition for students continues to increase as new institutions enter the market and traditional institutions continue to add distance programs to their curriculum. State regulatory bodies continue the trend of revising statutes and regulations to encompass the evolving nature of the distance education sector. Additionally, the increased use of the Internet for distance education enrollments and course delivery is requiring states to reevaluate their positions concerning the regulation of educational institutions engaged in interstate commerce.

The U.S. Departments of Commerce and Education's report "Transforming Education and Training through Advanced Technologies" includes the results from the speak-up online survey where K-12 students across the country self-reported their use of technology. Report findings support Oblinger's statement that asserts future generations of higher education students are growing familiar and comfortable with distance education (Oblinger, 2001). More than 160,000 students from urban and rural schools participated in answering questions; 38% of these students were in grades K-6, and 62% were students in grades 6-12. Fifty-one percent of student responders were male, and 49% female.

Eighty-one percent of students in grades 6-12 indicated having at least one e-mail address, 38% in grades 3-5, and 19% in grades K-3. Seventy-five percent in grades 6-12 had at least one instant message screen name, as did 34% in grades 3-5. Sixty percent in grades 6-12 reported that they e-mailed or "instant messaged" adults such as teachers or coaches on a weekly basis. Students feedback indicated that they rely on Internet

technology to complete school work including: virtual textbooks and reference libraries to find source material for their school reports and projects; virtual tutors offering instruction; platforms for virtual study groups to collaborate with classmates on school work; and virtual guidance counselors that provide information related to their life decisions.

Advances in both cognitive science and information technology continue influencing education and training. Advanced technologies under development by U.S. businesses, universities, and government are creating rich and compelling learning opportunities that meet all learners' needs, and provide education and training when and where they are needed, while boosting the productivity of learning and lowering its costs. These technologies play a major role in meeting education and training challenges in the years ahead, and help make the U.S. workforce more competitive globally.

Distance Education in Postsecondary Education Institutions

The Internet and distance education enable higher education to reach populations in geographic areas that were unreachable before at an unprecedented scale and rate (McIntosh & Varaglu, 2005). Distance education is improving access to higher education while maintaining or reducing overhead costs. The delivery mode provides access to higher education without many of the capital expenditures such as dormitories, classrooms, faculty offices, and library shelf-space associated with traditional delivery. Distance education technologies help school administrators maximize the use of their institution's resources (Banas & Emory, 1998). Recent natural disasters such as Hurricanes' Rita and Katrina provide a strong reason for all higher education institutions to continue developing full capabilities in online learning environments as a strategy to

provide academic continuity and improve campus resiliency (Sloan Consortium, personal communication, September 12, 2007).

Between 1951 and 1992 over 22 universities provided access to university level courses to millions of learners located worldwide (Banas & Emory, 1998). In 2000, the U.S. Army, Navy, and Air Force announced their commitment to dedicate \$1 billion to provide university-based distance education for active-duty personnel and their families. Higher education journals described the initiative as a bold one that reassured college administrators venturing into distance learning (Noble, 2001). Allen and Seaman's longitudinal studies of online learning provide data to support the claim that online education has been gaining greater popularity year after year.

Their first survey study occurred in 2003 and has continued on a yearly basis. Survey respondents are typically Chief Academic Officers and Presidents of degree granting institutions of higher education in the US. Survey analysis ensured that results reflect the characteristics of the entire school population in terms of: (a) institution size, (b) institutions' public or private status, (c) institutions' nonprofit/for-profit status, and (d) Carnegie class.

The 2002 - 2003 survey polled 3,033 recipients and had a 32.8% response rate. Survey results revealed that public higher education institutions are the leaders in offering online courses and degree programs. In terms of online learning, 90% of public institutions offer at least one online course and 49% offer online degree programs. Among private institutions, 54.5% of respondents reported offering at least one online course and 35% reported offering online degree programs. Sixty seven percent respondents believe that online education is critical to their institutions' long-term

strategy, 20% disagreed, and the remainder gave neutral responses. As for faculty acceptance of value and legitimacy of online education, 60% of academic leaders perceive that faculty accept the value and legitimacy of online education, 19% disagree, and 21% remained neutral. The survey also revealed that 1.6 million of students were learning online in the Fall 2002 and about half a million of these students were taking all their courses online (Allen & Seaman, 2003).

The 2003 - 2004 survey polled 3,068 recipients and had a 38.1% response rate. Survey results revealed that online enrollments continued to grow at a faster rate than anticipated and show no indication of having reached a Plateau. In terms of online learning the percentage of public institutions offering at least one online course remained consistent at 90%. Among private for-profit institutions, 89% of respondents reported offering online courses experiencing a 50% increase from the previous year's results.

Using a seven-point Likert-scale ranging from strong disagreement to neutral to strong agreement, academic leaders rated their perception regarding online education as being part of the long-term school strategy. Favorable perceptions from public, private for-profit, and private non-profit institutions leaders came in at 96%, 89%, and 77% respectively. The survey also revealed that 1.9 million of students were learning online in the Fall 2002 and about half a million of these students were taking all their courses online (Allen & Seaman, 2004).

The 2005 survey polled 3,216 recipients and had a 31.9% response rate. Survey results revealed that enrollments for online learning continued growing at a faster rate than the overall rate of higher education enrollments. The study discovered the strong inroads of online education in the core offerings at most higher education institutions. In

terms of online learning the percentage of public institutions offering at least one online course remained consistent at 90%. Among private for-profit institutions, 89% of respondents reported offering online courses experiencing a 50% increase from the previous year's survey results.

Using the same seven-point Likert-scale ranging from strong disagreement to neutral to strong agreement, academic leaders rated their perception regarding online education as being critical to the long-term school strategy. The overall proportion increased to 56% in 2005 from 53% in 2003. The survey also revealed that over two million students were taking online courses in the Fall 2004 representing an 18.2 % growth from the previous year (Allen & Seaman, 2005).

The 2006 survey polled 4,491 recipients and had a 55% response rate. Survey results revealed that approximately 3.2 million students enrolled into an online higher education class, representing a 35% growth from the previous year. In terms of online learning, doctoral/ research institutions have the greatest penetration rate of online courses or programs. More than 96% of the largest institutions have some type of online course or program implemented. The survey also revealed that the larger the institution the more likely it was to have online courses or programs available to students.

Again academic leaders rated their perception regarding online education as being critical to the long-term school strategy on the seven-point Likert-scale that ranged from strong disagreement to strong agreement. The overall proportion increased to 58% in 2006 rising 2 points from the previous year. Chief Academic Officers from the surveyed institutions agreed that online education is reaching students not served by face-to-face programs, supporting the widespread belief that online education grants access to

individuals who would not otherwise be able to attend college on campus (Allen & Seaman, 2006).

The 2007 survey polled 4,491 recipients and had a 56% response rate. Survey results revealed that approximately 3.5 million students are enrolled into an online higher education class, representing nearly a 10% increase from the previous year. In terms of online learning, 35% of institutions are offering full online programs, a 4% increase from the previous year. The larger the institution the more likely it is to offer online courses and/or programs.

On the seven-point Likert-scale that ranged from strong disagreement to strong agreement, academic leaders perceptions regarding online education being critical to the long-term school strategy remained consistent. Some agree that distance learning is critical for their long-term survival. Others see distance learning as a short-term means of stimulating current enrollments while others see it as a means that goes against the nature of what they are trying to achieve at their institution. (Allen & Seaman, 2007).

Higher education institutions are jumping on the distance learning wagon for different reasons and at different times. For instance, in 2001 the Texas Women's University extended its mission of providing educational programs to meet the needs of adult students, especially women, who seek graduate study for career advancement through a fully online Master's degree in Family Studies. Students were satisfied with the online program. The most frequent themes for student satisfaction had to do with convenience and flexibility to pursue a graduate degree from a distance (Bold, 2005).

Rio Salado College's early distance education program maintained a small but consistent student enrollment in their correspondence courses and telecourses. In 1996

enrollments increased significantly with the addition of Internet as a delivery mode. By the end of 2003 the college expected enrollments to exceed 22,000 students or approximately 48% of the total college student count. Online learning became central to the College's mission exceeding the enrollment predictions of industry experts (Scarafiotti, 2003).

The implementation of distance education programs in traditional university environments imposes physical, cultural, and managerial changes. The transition into a technology supported mode requires academics, managers, and policy makers to undergo a paradigm change that acknowledges the fact that institutions, professors, and learners physical location are irrelevant in this mode of learning (O'Neill, Singh & O'Donoghue, 2004). According to Dupin-Bryant (2004) distance learning should be considered an integral part of higher education institutions' mission of providing access to education to individuals in underserved areas.

In 2002, the Association Liaison Office for University Cooperation in Development (ALO) and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) pointed out that some distance education programs may not succeed due to the faulty business model and broad institutional agendas that make distance education difficult to implement, or a combination of both. The committee posed the question of what might be emerging as "best practice" in how higher education institutions organize distance education. The consensus was that collaboration among higher education institutions is the method for ensuring that distance education programs are successful (Claffey, 2002).

The Western Governors Virtual University is an example of a collaborative virtual university established to facilitate the use of member institution's resources. The institution emerged in 1995 at an annual meeting of the Western Governors Association. The virtual institution serves the western region and aims to create partnerships in course delivery to avoid duplicate offerings, maximize the effective use of resources, and share instructors among institutions in the region (Johnstone & Tilson, 1997).

Virtual universities are able to reach populations located in isolated geographic locations and increase the availability of educational opportunities (Epper & Garn, 2003). The consistent decline in public resources motivates higher education institutions to seek new and innovative ways of developing and delivering learning through virtual universities. Additionally, the rapid development of the new information and communications technologies coupled with the extensive use of computers and the Internet growth facilitate teaching and school administration in the area of higher education (Anastasiades, 2002).

Epper and Garn (2003) conducted in-depth interviews and surveys to identify how Virtual Colleges and University Consortia in the US work in organizational and financial terms. Report findings suggest that VCUs follow one of the two service models: centralized or distributed. In the centralized model, institutions provide academic and administrative services to students. In the distributed model, the distance learning consortium hosts an online catalog of courses and each VCU member institution is responsible for providing most learning services.

Regarding financial models, VCUs can be either agency or enterprise models. The agency models are organizationally and financially embedded in an academic agency.

The enterprise models may be organizationally embedded in an academic agency, however, VCUs following this model behave as a business enterprise. These VCUs build revenue streams for self-sustainability and engage in quality control, performance measurement, standardization, and/or benchmarking.

Policy Vis-à-Vis Distance Higher Education

National education ministries in countries other than the US set education policy (Kerrey et al., 2000). In the US, each state establishes its own regulatory structure, which presents special challenges in the Internet era. The regulatory schemes of 56 operational units are remarkably different, ranging from the extremely prescriptive (New York) to minimal (Delaware) and in isolated cases non-existent (Montana).

Zeller (1995) believes that the conceptual policy models of the past are not adequate to shape policy considerations necessary for the future. She developed four models to categorize distance education systems in the US by policy orientation: laissez-faire, consortium, coordinating board, and comprehensive.

Laissez-faire. In this model each institution finances and controls its own distance education hardware and software. Institutions are self-contained working independently from one another and without a comprehensive state level plan for distance education. Institutions and agencies provide access to meet the education needs of a limited group of professional clients for instance, engineers and physicians. Characteristics of this model are: flexibility, competitive, and uses talent that is already in place. Some of its disadvantages are: duplication of resources and efforts, cost inefficiencies, and inability to meet education and training needs systematically.

Consortium. This arrangement facilitates some coordination among institutions. The model provides education opportunities to a limited group of clients for instance, employed professionals. Although, the state may provide funding to institutions, the state does not control institutions' technical capacity. Institutions tend to be self-contained. Characteristics of this model are: flexibility and ability to encourage and benefit from the talents and interests of member institutions' faculty and staff. Disadvantages are: duplication, cost inefficiencies, state's inability to ensure distance education is satisfying education and training needs, and inability to offer educational opportunities to the maximum number of citizens.

Coordinating board. A special board or committee with representatives from various provider entities and related agencies host routinely state-level planning sessions. The model facilitates making a broad range of education opportunities available to everyone and attempts to meet the needs of various student populations. One of the goals is to attempt to avoid duplication of courses and reduce costs. The advantages of this model are: fair distribution of education resources, broad range of courses and degree programs, reduced duplication of resources and efforts, and states' increased ability to focus education resources on target populations. Disadvantages are: cumbersome organization and management structure, a more institution driven structure rather than client driven, and some duplicate of resources and efforts.

Comprehensive. This model expands education opportunities to a broad range of student populations in a cost-effective manner while increasing participation in education. In this model one institution is in charge of conducting the state-level planning, coordination, integration, and delivery. The model is client driven and

representative of a collaborative distance education system. State level advantages are: ability to set and carry out public policy goals about educational access, ability to respond fairly and appropriately to many different groups of citizens seeking access to education opportunities, broader range of courses and degree programs, cost efficiency, reduced duplication of resources and efforts, and student driven program offerings.

Disadvantages are: limited ability to respond in a timely manner to local needs, inability to transfer credits due to programs quality, and non-educators in charge of the decision making.

Epper (1997) used Zeller's framework to carry out a comparative case study to examine Colorado, Minnesota, and Maine's experiences with distance education development and the effects caused by their selected public policy approach. Each of the three states under investigation fell under different distance education policy structures for improving access to postsecondary education. Colorado's laissez-faire structure lacked interdependency among state's higher education institutions. Minnesota's consortium structure showed limited cohesiveness and cooperation among institutions. Maine's comprehensive structure had stronger interdependencies among state's higher education institutions. This structure enabled the state to reach the broadest range of student populations.

According to Parrish and Wells (2000), legislators and higher education institutions need to jointly re-conceptualize their view of distance education and place it within the framework of public policy. Particularly, core policies pertaining to institutions' intellectual property, ownership of a distance education course, institutional and faculty rights and responsibilities after creating courses, faculty compensation,

teaching-load and acceptance, student access and privacy, potential liabilities such as copyright infringement liability, and accreditation approvals.

Meyer's (2002) study of distance education policy in higher education found that policy environments exist on a continuum from policy-free to policy-restricted, with several points in between. Policy-free environments have no policy in place and make decisions on a case-by-case basis. Policy-restricted environments characterize by having policies for all eventualities and basing decision making on those policies. Higher education institutions may exhibit one of the following four alternative processes when implementing distance education policy: do nothing, revise current policies, study the issue, or use incentives.

The do-nothing approach is pertinent when distance education is not a promising initiative for the institution, or institutions' faculty is risk-averse or reluctant to discuss a new policy. Revising current policies make sense when distance education is the most pertinent direction for the institution, institutions' environment favors policy discussion, and faculty will not initiate distance education efforts without appropriate policies in place. Studying the issue pays off when institutions plan to implement distance education in the future. Using incentives is appropriate when higher education institutions possess ample resources and faculty with above average reliance on incentives.

In an effort to reduce or eliminate existing or potential policy barriers to distance education, the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) approved the implementation of the SREB Distance Learning Policy Laboratory. The laboratory seeks to mitigate policy barriers to distance education in three broad areas: access, quality, and cost of education (SREB Distance Learning Policy Laboratory [SREB DLPL], 2002).

The Distance Learning Policy Laboratory's action agenda calls upon colleges, universities, and state leaders, in cooperation with SREB, to work together to obtain results on priority areas such as: student access to infrastructure, programs, services, training; regional resource sharing; financial policies to support distance education; and increased quality and accountability (SREB DLPL, 2002).

According to the SREB DLPL (2002), the key policy areas for colleges, universities, and states are: (a) student services: policies dealing with online, flexible, and efficient services that support on and off-campus students enrolled in distance education programs; (b) financial aid: policies making higher education available to all who can benefit from it, that are student centered, and that prevent fraud and abuse; (c) access to technology and support: policies addressing states' subsidies to fund technology and provide technical support to users; (d) financing: policy considering technology a core resource for all states, funded by the state, educational system, and institutions' education and business plans; (e) quality assurance: policy maximizing the reciprocity of high quality courses among national education networks; (f) academic credit transfer: policy achieving consensus among institutions of the required elements of degree programs; and (g) faculty support: policy supporting faculty roles in a digital environment.

Business Concepts Applied to Distance Higher Education

Public universities should be in direct and constant interaction with the area of businesses and the labor market while remaining firm and unalterable in relation to the philosophy that governs such institution and distinguishes it from a training center. This is not an easy task considering the oppressive environment that forces changes and puts

forward ideas of adjustability as the only weapon towards survival and competitiveness (Anastasiades, 2002).

The higher education industry is increasingly regulated by the state, yet is simultaneously opened to market forces (Middleton, 2000). E-business is likely to influence distance education (Oblinger, 2001). Common business terms like demand, supply, customer centricity, marketing strategies, marketing mix, supply chain are becoming common terms in the body of literature of distance higher education (Driscoll & Wicks, 1998; Oblinger, 2001; Kirp, 2003; Yudof, 2002).

According to Oblinger (2001) the projected value and profitability of e-learning draws competitors to an industry traditionally dominated by higher education institutions. These competitors are actively implementing strategies to retain students that provide integrated lifelong learning services to learners ranging from the learning content itself to post-graduation employment opportunities while offering a variety of services that encourage learners to stay with the organization in order to avoid the switching costs that come with switching to a different institution to complete a degree.

Similarities among e-business and distance education will exist for as long as the demand for distance and open learning education increases; internet's availability expands; technology becomes more affordable; energy requirements decrease; convenience and flexibility continue dominating learners' decision criteria; and students grow familiar and comfortable with distance education. Economies of scale increase institutions' competitiveness because they enable distance education providers to leverage research and development, curriculum development, sales efforts, and overall operating expenses.

According to Doucette (1998) traditional colleges and universities that explicitly acknowledge competition from the private, public, nonprofit, or for-profit sectors in their institutional planning will find more effective and efficient student centered ways to satisfy the market demand for education and training. According to Gallagher (2003) the most successful distance education institutions have an institution wide strategy that takes into account the operations of programs, departments, faculty, and administrators.

Santa Barbara City College, University of Central Florida, Bismarck State College, Portland Community College, Regis University, Strayer University, and the University of Phoenix Online are some of the institutions that have successfully aligned their institutional strategies. These institutions consider marketing research a crucial component of their institutional strategy because it helps them assess student demand, determine the appropriate delivery model, and generate leads for prospective students.

Symonds (2003) studied for-profit higher education institutions that entered the higher education market to make money. These institutions reported revenue figures equal to those of the wealthiest traditional higher education institutions in the nation. Phoenix University is a pioneer of for-profit colleges that emerged as a dynamic new competitive force in higher education. The university's strategy focuses on treating students like customers, designing programs to match the job market, and eliminating costly research labs. In the long run, for-profit institutions may challenge traditional universities' dominance in some program areas.

Driscoll and Wicks (1998) found that some universities are using aggressive marketing strategies. The most popular strategy is the market in approach. The strategy focuses on the satisfaction of students' wants and needs. Other institutions continue

designing products to suit parochial interests rather than adopting a marketing orientation that focuses on the customer. Higher education and marketing research indicate that switching to a customer-focused strategy is inevitable for institutions that want to survive in dynamic and complex environments.

Limits on the application of marketing concepts throughout the higher education industry are necessary to avoid low educational quality and conflicts with the community. Selling university degrees as products in a competitive market can hinder the long-term interests of society, and quality of degree programs. The quality of higher education would be threatened by using a commercial exchange as the basis of the relationship between students and schools (Driscoll & Wicks, 1998).

According to Yudof (2002), as state budgets continue allocating less monetary resources to university budgets students become the principal payers of their educational costs. Public higher education institutions distinguish themselves for their many traditions and functions within the public realm and similarities with private colleges and universities. The challenge for these institutions is to retain the best of their public traditions while adapting to a more privatized model.

According to Kirp (2003), in the last decade a new breed of for-profit schools less marginal and less disdained than its predecessors entered the higher education market. These institutions' curricula ranges from certification courses like Cisco or Microsoft engineer certification exam to degree programs like associate degrees and Ph.Ds. These schools are accredited and qualified to give students access to federal loan programs. Market minded and traditionalists reactions toward for-profit institutions vary by perspective. Market minded strategists welcome the arrival of for-profit universities.

Traditionalists oppose the idea and condemned the transformation of the hallowed university into a mere marketplace. The core complaint is that for-profit institutions are operated as businesses that emphasize profits at the expense of learning. There is no explicit evidence however, proving that traditional universities do not operate as for-profit institutions.

Summary

Distance education is defined as the teaching and learning arrangement in which the learner and teacher are separated by geography and time (Williams, Paprock, and Covington, 1999). Extensive work has been done to define and outline the characteristics of distance learning (Pascopella, 2003; Epper & Garn, 2003; Herder, Subrahmanina, Talukdar, Turk, Westerberg, 2002; National Association of State Boards of Education, 2001; Driscoll & Wicks, 1998; Oblinger, 2001; Kirp, 2003; Yudof, 2002). Forces like enhanced public access explain the involvement of public policy in the distance higher education field (Berg, 1998).

The theoretical framework of distance higher education indicates that common state and system leaders' goals in regard to postsecondary education consist of providing educational opportunities that will result in a better-educated workforce, personal property for citizens, and a strong economy for the state (Epper & Garn, 2003). Higher education institutions have the primary responsibility of generating knowledge and training people to produce rewarding returns in terms of technology, organizational intelligence, productivity, and rational consumerism. Developed economies educate their workforces to use scientific knowledge, which in turn generates more income (Ibarra,

2002). The demand for distance and open learning education is increasing because education and continuous learning are vital in all societies (Oblinger, 2001).

Although the available literature of distance higher education is abundant, the field is still in its earlier stages. Studies referenced throughout this literature review used the online survey methodology and reported findings in terms of descriptive statistics. The remainder studies used either a comparative case study design or were pure policy analysis articles. The body of literature concerning with business concepts applied to distance higher education are primarily opinion pieces. The distance higher education policy field continues to evolve and further research is necessary to document and be able to predict changes and behaviors in the field and affected stakeholders.

CHAPTER III

METHOD

Chapter two of this document reviewed literature related to distance education, higher education policy, and distance higher education policy. This chapter describes the method selected to collect information concerning with the research questions. A case study is an appropriate method for investigating the research problem of distance education policy because the study seeks to describe and explain how Virtual College and University Consortia, representative of the Epper and Garn taxonomy, implemented the faculty support policy construct published by the Southern Regional Education Board, and how the construct influences the operation of each representative VCU.

Case studies examine specific phenomena that represent a concern or issue (Merriam, 1988). This study's phenomenon is distance education policy. Limited studies are investigating the effectiveness of policies or mechanisms for making policies at the national, state, or institutional levels. This fact is concerning, considering that distance education policy influences the distance education field in terms of definition, status, reputation, and funding (Farnes, 2000).

A case study design allows the acquisition of a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under study and the development of general theoretical statements of policy processes. A research design plan outlines steps for assembling, organizing, and integrating data that will yield research findings. Case studies are not associated with specific data collection methods or data analysis. However, certain techniques are more popular than others (Merriam, 1988).

A multiple-case study design obtained a better insight, description, and discovery of how the faculty support policy construct exists today in the four Virtual Colleges and Universities Consortia under investigation, how the faculty support policy construct influences the operation of each representative VCU, and what patterns exist in faculty support policy characteristics across the four representative VCUs.

Institutions under investigation are: The Mississippi Virtual Community College - Distributed Agency Model, Louisiana Board of Regents - Distributed Enterprise Model, Florida Distance Learning Consortium - Central Agency Model, and Kentucky Virtual University - Central Enterprise Model. Optimistically, the study findings will constitute a base of knowledge for future comparison and theory building (Merriam, 1988) in distance education policy, a field where limited research exists.

Case Studies

A case study is an in-depth study of the case under consideration (Hamel, Dufor & Fortin, 1993) and is a type of interpretive research influenced by the sociology, history, anthropology, and psychology fields (Merriam, 1988). According to Lincoln and Guba (1985) case study design is the backbone of naturalist inquiry or inquiry that happens in its natural setting. According to Merriam's (1988) definition of a case study, the design of this study will facilitate a comprehensive understanding of the faculty support construct

at the selected Virtual Colleges and Universities Consortia, which in turn will help develop general theoretical statements about regularities in structures and processes.

The four features of case studies highlighted by Merriam, particularistic, descriptive, heuristic, and inductive, will be evident throughout the study because it will look at the particulars of the faculty support construct, describe with a rich or thick description how each policy works in the construct, formulate generalizations across like virtual universities, and present reasons that may help explain why differences exist. Through the process of this study, I made decisions, choices, and exercised my judgment. Consequently, according to Merriam (1988) my view of the world influenced the research process and outcomes presented in chapters four and five.

The characteristics of qualitative or naturalistic case studies are: natural setting, humans as primary data-gathering instruments, use of tacit knowledge, qualitative methods, purposive sampling, inductive data analysis, grounded theory, emergent design, negotiated outcomes, case-study reporting mode, idiographic interpretation, tentative application of findings, focus-determined boundaries, and special criteria for trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985) a natural setting is the site or context naturalist researchers choose to carry out their research because naturalist ontology suggests that realities are wholes that cannot be understood in isolation from their contexts (p.39). I used myself along with leaders at the institutions under study as data gathering instruments primarily due to our versatility in adjusting to the varied realities that emerged throughout the study. Our tacit knowledge of distance learning in the higher education context dominated our interaction between investigators and respondents. Qualitative methods were more versatile for dealing with the multiple realities that

emerged through the study. Purposive sampling allowed me to maximize the range of multiple realities across the four institutions under study that are representative of the Epper and Garn taxonomy. I used inductive data analysis because of its potential to uncover the multiple realities underneath collected data and identify the reciprocal interactions that shape these realities. Grounded theory favored emergent theories that in the context of this study were preferable over a priori ones. A priori theories were incapable of encompassing the multiple realities that were likely to emerge through the study.

The emergent design allowed me to devise the design as the multiple realities emerged. The ability to negotiate meanings and interpretations allowed me to reconstruct the knowledge acquired from the human sources that initially facilitated the information or knowledge. The overall reporting mode of the case study was flexible enough to allow me to describe the multiple realities encountered through the study, transfer knowledge through thick descriptions, and naturalistic generalizations. Idiographic interpretations allowed me to understand data in terms of particulars as opposed to in terms of generalizations. Realities in this study are multiple and different thus, a broad application of study findings is tentative. Focus-determined boundaries empowered me to set boundaries around the study's emergent focus and respective emergent realities. The special criteria for trustworthiness or operational procedures to control for the equivalents to internal and external validity, reliability, and objectivity are as follow:

Internal and External Validity

The term validity addresses how researchers establish confidence in the “truth” of the findings of a particular inquiry regarding respondents in the context in which an

inquiry is carried out (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The two types of validity accounted by in quantitative studies are internal and external. Case studies deal with each type of validity as follow:

Internal Validity. Internal validity is the extent to which variations in the dependent variable are attributable to controlled variation in the independent variable (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In qualitative research, internal validity addresses how researchers' findings match reality (Merriam, 1988). Ratcliff (1983) suggests assessing validity via interpretation of investigators' experience, rather than in terms of reality itself. Data is always subject to interpretation or translation, phenomena changes through researchers' observation or measurement processes, and numbers, equations, and words are abstract representations of reality (as cited in Merriam, 1988). Inferences are necessary when conducting case studies particularly when an event cannot be directly observed (Yin, 1994).

Triangulating findings implies using multiple perceptions to validate the recurrence of an observation, interpretation, or inference. Because the recurrence of perceptions gathered via observations and interpretations is not perfect the process of triangulation helps identify different ways phenomena occur, and how it is perceived, which in turn clarifies meaning (Stake, 2005). Strategies used in this study to ensure internal validity are redundant data gathering procedures to triangulate findings. Selected data gathering procedures are interviews and document analysis.

External Validity. Refers to the approximate validity of our predisposition to infer that an alleged causal relationship can be generalized among alternate measures of cause and effect and different types of persons, settings, and times (Lincoln & Guba,

1985). Unlike scientific experiments that are generalizable across populations and/or universes, research case studies are generalizable to theoretical propositions.

The goal of theoretical propositions is to expand and generalize theories (analytic generalization) instead of enumerate frequencies as it is the case in statistical generalizations (Yin, 1994). Theories are ordered sets of statements about generic behaviors or structures that exist throughout broad ranges of specific instances. Generalizations focus on behaviors and structures, and organized and ordered generalizations make behaviors and structures more generic. As the range of specific instances where behaviors or structures exist becomes broader the resulting ideas are more deserving of the label theory (Weick, 1989).

The present study seeks to generalize institutional policy structures with respect to faculty support. The faculty support policy construct published by the Southern Regional and Education Board serves as the source of truth with respect to institutional policies needed to support faculty. The policy construct addresses faculty issues concerning with using technology to improve the process effectiveness of teaching and learning, e-learning support, compensation and incentive structures for faculty new roles, and copyright policies allowing access to information yet protecting intellectual property rights for content owners.

This study delves into the institutional faculty support policies at four SREB member institutions with different levels of centralization and emphasis on business practices. Findings from each of these institutions can be generalized across the remainder SREB institutions classified under the same quadrant of centralization and degree of business practices as outlined in the Epper and Garn taxonomy.

Sampling

Survey sampling logic requires an operational enumeration of the entire universe or pool of potential respondents, and a statistical procedure for selecting a specific subset of respondents to be surveyed. Inferential statistics establish the confidence intervals with which one can assume the representation is accurate. The assumption is that data resulting from the sample reflects the entire universe or pool. This sampling logic is inappropriate for case studies. The present study consists of four case replications.

In experimental research, the goal is to replicate significant findings with additional experiments. Subsequent experiments may replicate the conditions of the initial experiment and others may alter one or two experimental conditions to find out if the finding still replicates. Further replications of the original finding give worthiness to the investigation and interpretation of findings. Multiple-case studies function in a similar manner because each case either predicts similar results via an identical replication or predicts contrasting results for predictable reasons also referred to as a theoretical replication (Yin, 1994).

This is a holistic multiple case-study of four SREB member institutions with different levels of centralization and emphasis on business practices. The four institutions under study are: Mississippi Virtual Community College, Florida Distance Learning Consortium, Louisiana Board of Regents Electronic Campus, and Kentucky Virtual University. The representative state universities and/or colleges are as follow:

- 1- Florida Distance Learning Consortium - University of Central Florida
- 2- Kentucky Virtual Campus (KYVC) - University of Louisville
- 3- The Louisiana Board of Regents Electronic Campus – Northwestern State University
- 4- Mississippi Virtual Community - Copiah Lincoln Community College

Figure 5. Purposive sampling. SREB member virtual institutions representative of each quadrant of the Epper and Garn taxonomy along with the higher education institutions selected for the study.

University of Central Florida (UCF). In 1963, Governor Farris Bryant signed Bill No. 125 authorizing the state board of education to establish a state university or a branch of an existing state university in the east central part of Florida. The university's mission is to offer high-quality undergraduate and graduate education, student development, and continuing education; conduct research and creative activities; and provide services that enhance the intellectual, cultural, environmental, and economic development of the

metropolitan region, address national and international issues in key areas, establish UCF as a major presence, and contribute to the global community.

Presently, the University offers 223 degree programs, has 12 colleges that have awarded more than 172,000 degrees. Headcount of the incoming freshman class for the academic year 2007-08 was of 4,032 students. The total fall 2008 enrollment was of 50,254 students. UCF is an academic and research leader in the fields of: optics, modeling and simulation, engineering and computer science, business administration, education, science, hospitality management, and digital media.

UCF students come from 67 Florida counties, 50 states, and 141 countries. In the 2007-08 school year, UCF professors received \$122.8 million in research funding. The University serves its surrounding communities with their diverse and expanding populations, technological corridors, and international partners. The university employs over 1,400 teaching faculty and adjuncts. (University of Central Florida [UCF], 2008).

University of Louisville (UofL). According to the University of Louisville website (2007), UofL is a state supported research university located in Kentucky's metropolitan area. Accredited by the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools to award associate, bachelor, master, specialist, doctoral, and first-professional degrees (D.M.D., J.D., M.D.). The university's mission is to: be a premier, nationally recognized metropolitan research university with a commitment to the liberal arts and sciences and to the intellectual, cultural, and economic development of our diverse communities and citizens through the pursuit of excellence in five interrelated strategic areas: (1) educational experience, (2) research, creative, and

scholarly activity, (3) accessibility, diversity, equity, and communication, (4) partnerships and collaborations, and (5) institutional effectiveness of programs and services.

UofL offers 100% online bachelors and masters degrees to students from around the world. Blackboard is the university's content management system that allows students to interact with instructors and classmates. Distance education classes follow the same semester calendar as traditional classes and students pay 130% of what they would normally pay for a regular face-to-face class.

The Delphi center serves as the university's distance education office providing support services to distance education students and faculty. University professors frequently receive Online Excellence Awards, presented by the Kentucky Virtual University for outstanding technology and pedagogy use in their online courses.

Northwestern State University (NSU). The university's mission is to be a responsive and student oriented institution committed to the creation, dissemination, and acquisition of knowledge through teaching, research, and service. Excellence in teaching in graduate and undergraduate programs is one of the university's highest priorities. NSU prepares students to become productive members of society. The university promotes economic development and improvements in the quality of life of the citizens in its region (Northwestern State University [NSU], 2006a).

NSU's vision is to strive for educational quality through excellence in teaching and research, innovative uses of technology, and exceptional service to students and other constituencies. Northwestern strives to maintain a student-oriented environment that offers challenging and rewarding academic experiences. NSU delivers degree programs and effective services on campus and throughout Louisiana, the nation, and the world via

its electronic and distance learning education unit (NSU Office of Institutional Research [NSUOIR], 2009).

In 1884, Act 51 of the State Legislature created a Louisiana State Normal School for the preparation of teachers. In 1970, the school's title changed to Northwestern State University of Louisiana. To date, NSU has permanent facilities in Leesville and Shreveport, offers instruction across central Louisiana, and offers over 79 programs through its seven colleges (NSUOIR, 2009).

In 2008, NSU male enrollment headcount was 2,819 and female 6,292. Over 4,000 undergraduate students took distance learning classes and over 900 graduate students took distance learning classes. Student demographics were as follow: 2% American Indian, less than one percent Asian or Pacific Islander, 27% Black, 2% Hispanic, less than 1% non-resident aliens, less than 1% other minorities, 62% White, 5% unknown (NSUOIR, 2009).

Copiah Lincoln Community College (EMCC). Copiah-Lincoln Junior College formed in the summer of 1928, under the authority of section 308, Chapter 283, of the General Laws of the State of Mississippi of 1924. More than 90 students enrolled in the first year; 84 years later, student enrollment surpasses the 3,000 mark. In 1988, the state and the Board of Trustees approved the Junior College to become a Community College (Bates et al., 2009).

The college aims to achieve the following goals: (a) provide a variety of educational programs; (b) provide a broad range of support services such as library and learning resources, distance learning, information technology, student development services, and athletics; (c) promote staff and faculty members' professional growth and development; (d) provide a variety of services to college constituents through

partnerships among agencies that support economic development; (e) maintain strong commitment to the use of innovative and relevant technology in all college programs and services; (f) provide leadership in the coordination of all programs to improve relations with area high schools, other community/junior colleges, and four-year colleges and universities; (g) provide cultural and recreational opportunities to students, faculty, staff, and citizens of the College service area and beyond (Bates et al., 2009).

The Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools accredits Copiah-Lincoln Community College to award Associate in Arts and Associate in Applied Science degrees. The college participates in the American Association of Community Colleges, the Mississippi Association of Community and Junior Colleges, the Mississippi Association of Colleges, and the Southern Association of Community, Junior, and Technical Colleges (Ellett, 2007).

Size. A case study does not represent a sample, and the typical criteria regarding sample size are irrelevant in case studies (Yin, 1994). The Epper and Garn taxonomy consisting of a two by two matrix with level of centralization along the Y axis and level of business practices along the X axis drove the number of cases to include in this multiple case-study. Because this is a multiple case design each representative institution constitutes a case and should return contrasting results with respect to the SREB faculty support policy construct due to their level of centralization and level of business practices. The choice to include four cases in this study is to begin to build knowledge upon the Epper and Garn VCU taxonomy.

Selection. The selection of representative institutions for each VCU for this study was purposive. Initial institutions selected: (a) Florida International University (FIU) (b)

University of Louisville (UofL), (c) Louisiana Tech University (LTU), and (d) East Mississippi Community College (EMCC). A primary selection criterion for FIU was that the dissertation co-chair is a tenured faculty member at FIU and could facilitate access to school information. The dissertation chair along with the remainder committee members and doctoral student are graduate faculty and doctoral candidate respectively from the University of Louisville and could facilitate access to information. The selection criterion for Louisiana Tech University and East Mississippi Community College were website appeal and perceived strength of distance learning plan at each institution.

After contacting the distance learning leaders at each of the selected institutions, I decided to re-evaluate the selection of FIU, LTU, and EMCC. Replacing FIU, the University of Central Florida (UCF) has a more robust distributed learning program. UCF offers many courses through the Florida Distance Learning Consortium and has written policies guiding its distributed learning operations.

The leader at Louisiana Tech University declined to take part in the study because his institution was in the process of re-writing their distance learning policies to guide their processes. Similar to the Florida case, Northwestern State University proved to have a more robust electronic learning program and Dr. Darlene Williams, Vice President of Technology, Research, and Economic Development was very open and available to facilitate information concerning with the institutions' electronic learning policies. Lastly, replacing the East Mississippi Community College, Copiah Lincoln Community College proved to have a more robust distance learning program offering a myriad of classes through the Mississippi Virtual Community College. The choice to select an institution with a greater volume of DL courses available through the VCU seemed appropriate and natural for this study.

Selected VCUs are the most representative of each quadrant of the Epper and Garn VCU taxonomy as cited by the authors. The goal is to get a better insight of how the faculty support policy construct exists today at each representative VCU, how the faculty support policy construct influences VCUs operations, and what patterns exist in faculty support policy characteristics across the four representative VCUs accounting for their level of centralization and degree of business practices.

Ideally, this type of study design would have a minimum of two individual cases within each subgroup or quadrant of the taxonomy in order to complement the theoretical replications across subgroups or across the taxonomy with literal replications within each group. As in multiple experiments, in spite of lacking within case replications, the analytical conclusions of this multiple-case study are powerful because of the multiple case-study design (Yin, 1994).

Assignment_ The study did not require any assignments. The institutions under study are representative of each quadrant of the Epper and Garn taxonomy as outlined by the authors in their study.

Bias

Yin (1994) asserts that case studies are frequently criticized because the design allows researchers to manipulate findings to reflect their personal beliefs and value systems. Case study researchers have preconceived knowledge of the issues under study. Their preconceived knowledge introduces bias and leads to the idea that investigators use the case-study design to substantiate their preconceived positions of issues.

Researchers' degree of openness to encountering contrary findings is directly proportional to the study's level of bias. Janesick (1994) believes that case-study researchers that articulate their ideology and/or conceptual frame of study provide readers

with the context where study questions came from. My way to reduce personal bias is to report preliminary findings to individuals who can offer alternative explanations and suggestions for data collection. Any documentable rebuttals I find help reduce the study's bias.

The institutions under study are the most representative of each quadrant of the Epper and Garn VCU taxonomy as cited by the taxonomy's authors. The study is biased in the sense that it assumes each institution is the most representative example of the degree of centralization and emphasis on business practices as outlined in the taxonomy. A more recent study would confirm whether the institutions are still the most representative of the respective quadrant of the Epper & Garn taxonomy, however, such analysis is beyond the scope of this study.

Materials and Procedures

The goal in outlining the study's materials and procedures is to summarize each step in the execution of the research process so that a reader could potentially replicate the study (American Psychological Association [APA], 2001).

Data Collection. A strength of data collection for case-studies is the flexibility to use multiple sources of evidence (Yin, 1994). Data for the present study came from interviews and document analysis. Multiple sources of evidence help develop converging lines of inquiry also referred to as triangulation. Conclusions of case studies based on multiple sources of information are likely to be more convincing and accurate.

Documentary information may take different forms and for the same reason, requires a data collection plan. Documents are not always accurate or bias free. Their primary purpose is to help researchers corroborate and supplement information from other sources. Interviews are a critical source of information for case studies. Interview

questions are seldom linear or rigid. Throughout interviews, researchers have two jobs: (a) follow their line of inquiry as reflected by the case study protocol and (b) ask questions in a conversational and unbiased manner while still following their line of inquiry. Both components help researchers gain a better understanding of the issue under study (Yin, 1994).

Pilot Study. Researchers can practice data collection techniques in pilot case studies. These studies help refine data collection plans with respect to content and procedure. Pilot case-studies provide methodological insights relevant to field questions and logistics during the field inquiry (Yin, 1994). This study did not use a pilot study.

Human Subject Protection. Human subject protection addresses social concerns pertaining to research that involves human subjects. Federal regulations to protect human subjects emerged in response to scandals in the biomedical and social/behavioral research (Braunschweiger & Hansen, 2008). The University of Louisville's Institutional Review Boards (IRBs) are committees that oversee research involving human subjects at the institution. These committees ensure that research is in accordance with federal regulations and that human subjects' rights are protected for all ongoing investigations.

Federal regulations and the University of Louisville policy require that the IRB review all data gathered from human subjects prior to the implementation of any research activity (University of Louisville, 2008). Effective July 2000, the University of Louisville began requiring investigators and key personnel to obtain human subject protections training. The investigator of this study completed the CITI Basic online course designed for first time researchers and successfully completed the refresher online course. The study's IRB protocol is exempt (Institutional Review Board, personal communication, November 5, 2008).

Study Procedures

Document Analysis. Documents are sources of data accessible to researchers that can ground investigations in the context of the problem under investigation. Documentary materials are stable and objective and grounded in the real world. Metaphorically speaking, documents are voices begging to be heard (Glaser and Strauss, 1967 as cited in Merriam, 1988). Documents selected for inclusion in this study include: (a) selected institutions' websites, (b) institutional policy documents, (c) institutional and operational documents, (d) institutional press releases, and (e) journal articles concerning the selected four institutions.

Interviews. Merriam (1988) defines interviews as conversations in which one person elicits information from another (p. 71). Through interviews, researchers are able to enter another person's perspective (Patton, 1980 as cited in Merriam, 1988) and get information that is not available through observation. The interview continuum ranges from highly structured questionnaire-driven to semistructured to open-ended conversational formats.

Semistructured interviews follow a list of pre-set topics to explore that allow researchers to react to the emerging worldview of the respondent and possible new ideas on the topic. For the purpose of this study, semi-structured interviews with a defined set of themes are appropriate. Interview themes revolved around faculty support policies addressing issues such as use of technology to improve the process of teaching and learning, supporting faculty roles in an e-learning environment, compensation and incentive structures for faculty in distance learning roles, and copyright policies. Interviewed individuals are in roles that interface with individuals that craft and influence faculty policies pertaining to distance education programs in their respective institutions.

Data Analysis. Simultaneous collection and analysis of data is one of the distinguishing characteristics of qualitative research. Four major categories grouped all collected documents –one category for each selected institution. Each category was then subdivided into nine smaller categories –one for each faculty support theme. The faculty support policy construct matrix along with a color-coding system for the sub-categories helped classify collected information under themes and sub-themes (see sample matrix in appendix C). Classified information then, helped answer the three research questions of the study: (a) how does the faculty support policy construct exist today, (b) how does the policy construct influence the institution’s operations, and (c) are there any patterns across the four institutions under study?

The outline of study procedures is as follows:

1. Detailed examination of the web sites related to the public virtual universities.
2. Search of library databases for any reference to each of the public virtual universities.
3. Mail letter to public relations contact at each public university and college requesting policy documents.
4. Mail letter to the President of each public University and College requesting a copy of pertinent policy documents.
5. Conduct semi-structured interviews.
6. Categorize collected data into one of the four major categories.
7. Categorized collected data from each major category into one of the five sub-categories.
8. Color code selected documents.
9. Build each institution’s case showing how the faculty policy construct exists today, how the construct influences their operations, and cross-case patterns.

Summary

Case study design allows the acquisition of holistic understanding of particular phenomena under study while allowing the development of general theoretical statements (Merriam, 1988), which in this context would be the development of general theoretical statements pertaining to distance higher education policy. Case studies are in-depth studies of particular cases under consideration (Hamel, Dufor & Fortin, 1993). This study is a holistic multiple case-study of four SREB member institutions with different levels of centralization and emphasis on business practices. The Epper and Garn taxonomy consisting of a two by two matrix with level of centralization along the Y axis and level of business practices along the X axis drove the number of cases to include in this multiple case-study design.

The goal of this study was to generalize institutional policy structures with respect to the faculty support policy construct published by the Southern Regional and Education Board. The policy construct serves as the source of truth with respect to institutional policies needed to support faculty in an e-learning environment. The construct addresses faculty issues concerning with using technology to improve the process effectiveness of teaching and learning, e-learning support, compensation and incentive structures for faculty new roles, and copyright policies allowing access to information yet protecting intellectual property rights for content owners. Optimistically, the study added value to the base of knowledge for future comparison and theory building (Merriam, 1988) in the distance education policy field, a field where limited research exists.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

This research examined how the faculty support policy construct developed by the Southern Regional Education Board exists in the context of the Epper and Garn taxonomy that classifies Virtual Colleges and University Consortia by their degree of centralization and emphasis on business practices. Centralization refers to VCU's ability to provide academic and administrative services to students; business practices encompass institutions' degree of self-sustainability, quality control, performance management, standardization, and benchmarking. The research findings for each quadrant of the taxonomy's two by two matrix are below.

Central Enterprise Model

The Epper & Garn (2003) study defines virtual colleges and university consortia operating under the central enterprise model as institutions that exercise stronger management control over their operations than any of its counterparts. These institutions seek financial stability that allows them to operate regardless of state and university system allocations. Characteristics of these institutions are: high levels of centralization and business practices. In their 2003 study, the authors identified the Kentucky Virtual University as the most representative virtual institution of the central enterprise model.

Kentucky Public Postsecondary Education

The Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education coordinates change and improvement in Kentucky's public postsecondary education system as outlined in the Kentucky Postsecondary Education Improvement Act of 1997. The Council is a statewide coordinating agency comprised of sixteen members with fourteen citizens, one faculty member, one student appointed by the Governor, and the Commissioner of Education (Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education [CPE], 2007).

The Council is responsible for leading state policy leaders' reform efforts such as, ensuring a well-coordinated and efficient postsecondary and adult education system in Kentucky, and that public institutions coordinate and connect through the use of technology (Wikipedia, 2008). The Council was originally established in 1934 as the Council on Public Higher Education, and was renamed the Council on Higher Education in 1977. Twenty years later, the Kentucky General Assembly passed higher education reforms in the Commonwealth with the passage of the Postsecondary Education Improvement Act of 1997, commonly referred to as House Bill 1 (HB1) (CPE, 2007).

House Bill 1 created the Council on Postsecondary Education to provide direction and oversight to all Kentucky postsecondary institutions. This legislation intends to help Kentucky improve the quality of life of its citizens to at least the national average by the year 2020. State leaders agreed that in order to increase citizens' quality of life, Kentucky must increase their educational attainment. Therefore mandating that by the year 2020, the Commonwealth would have:

1. An integrated system of postsecondary education planned and funded to enhance economic development and quality of life.

2. A major comprehensive research institution ranked among the top 20 across the nation at the University of Kentucky.
3. A premier metropolitan research university nationally recognized at the University of Louisville.
4. Regional universities working cooperatively with other postsecondary institutions to assure statewide access to baccalaureate and master's degrees of a quality at or above the national average.
5. A comprehensive community and technical college system with a mission that assures access throughout the Commonwealth to a two-year course of general studies capable of transferring to a baccalaureate program, the training necessary to develop a workforce with the skills to meet the needs of new and existing industries, and remedial and continuing education to improve the employability of citizens.
6. An efficient, responsive, and coordinated system of providers that delivers educational services to all adult citizens in quantities and of a quality that is comparable to the national average or above and significantly elevates the level of education of the adults of the Commonwealth.

Additionally, House Bill 1 created the Commonwealth Virtual University now known as the Kentucky Virtual Campus and charged it with making academic programs available to citizens through the use of modern communication information dissemination methods. The Distance Learning Advisory Committee makes recommendations on the implementation of the Commonwealth Virtual University to the Council on Postsecondary Education (Kentucky Postsecondary Education Improvement Act, 1997).

The Distance Learning Advisory Committee (DLAC) is responsible for creating committees and work groups responsible for planning and recommending policies and procedures for the operation of the Kentucky Virtual Campus (KYVC). The Committee addresses the coordination of policies, programs, support services, and infrastructure in support of distance education across all Kentucky postsecondary education institutions (KCPE, 2009).

Kentucky Virtual Campus (KYVC): formerly known as the Kentucky Virtual University began servicing students in the fall of 1999. KYVC partners with higher education institutions and state agencies to facilitate access to online learning to Commonwealth citizens. In the fall of 2005, KYVC served over 55,000 students. More than 42,000 enrollees were students of Kentucky academic institutions. During its early years, KYVC provided statewide coordination and program development support to member institutions; the virtual campus was a service provider of applications and services aimed at supporting integrated, statewide access to online learning (KCPE, 2006). See appendix D for the list of member institutions.

Through the years, the mission of the virtual campus evolved. The campus now aims to serve as a statewide advocate for access to learning through technology, to serve as a catalyst for innovation and excellence in electronic learning, and to promote the effective use of resources among its members. The campus aspires to create a technology-supported, lifelong learning environment that results in better lives for Kentucky's people (KCPE, 2006).

According to KYVU's strategic plan (2006), the campus serves as an advocate for expanding access to educational opportunities by using technology to overcome time and

place barriers; attracts Kentucky's citizens to technology driven lifelong learning opportunities; promotes statewide collaboration among colleges, universities, and workforce agencies that sustain lifelong learning via a statewide sharable content repository; encourages state-wide collaborative activities that foster economies of scale and save cost; drives the state's research agenda of electronic learning in order to monitor, inform, and guide state's leaders of learning; fosters innovative technologies that enhance the quality and accessibility of electronic learning.

Ten years ago, the Commonwealth concluded that Kentucky was a state in long-term poverty, with low college-going rates, low wage structure, and historical out-migration of its citizens in search of better jobs and better lives. KYVC is the response to the need for a means to expand access to Kentucky's postsecondary education opportunities. The proposal for a "Commonwealth Virtual University" came from a committee of Kentucky's college and university presidents who supported the initiative, and, as statutory members of the Distance Learning Advisory Committee, direct KYVC and statewide distance learning policy development for the state (KYVU, 2006).

Among the services provided by KYVU are:

1. KYVU online course catalog: listing over 1,400 courses and 100 online academic, professional development, and adult education programs.
2. KYVU call center: servicing current and future students, faculty, and staff experiencing registration and account enrollment issues.
3. KYVU 24/7 live technical support: servicing students and faculty experiencing technical difficulties.

4. Universal coordinated advising network (U CAN): answering academic counseling and financial aid questions.
5. KYVU instructional design services: service available to all KYVU member institutions.
6. KYVU revolving loan fund: interest free loans available to institutions wanting to develop additional programs for electronic delivery.
7. KYVU course management software: this initiative subsidizes the statewide Blackboard consortial agreement.
8. Elluminate tool: online, interactive meeting, and real-time instructional support application.
9. KYVU's electronic learning resource management assistance software: system providing single sign-on portal to all KYVU learning platforms/tools.
10. Training: service available to all KYVU and KYVL partners aiming to facilitate understanding of all the electronic tools available for electronic learning delivery.
11. KYVU EduCart: electronic credit card processor available to students to register, pay, and access professional development instruction online.
12. KYVU excellence awards: aiming to recognize best practices in online course development and delivery through peer-reviewed competition among faculty using KYVU services.

A central goal for KYVU is to reduce digital divide issues as well as policy and practice barriers that prevent technology-based lifelong learning (KYVU, 2006).

University of Louisville

A state supported research university located in Louisville, KY; the largest metropolitan area in the state. The Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools accredits the University of Louisville's associate, bachelor, master, specialist, doctoral, and first-professional degrees (D.M.D., J.D., M.D.). Student enrollment for fall 2007 was 21,689. Student demographics consisted of: 11% African-Americans, 5% other, 6% non-resident aliens, 2% unknown, and 76% white (UofL, 2009).

The University's mission as outlined in the state's legislature is to become a premier, nationally recognized metropolitan research university. The university is committed to the liberal arts and sciences and to the intellectual, cultural, and economic development of the community and citizens through the pursuit of excellence in five interrelated strategic areas: (a) educational experience, (b) research, creative, and scholarly activity, (c) accessibility, diversity, equity, and communication, (d) partnerships and collaborations, and (e) institutional effectiveness of programs and services (UofL, 2009).

The Delphi Center for Teaching and Learning at the University of Louisville is charged to promote excellence in teaching and learning through: (a) workshops, conferences, and materials to help faculty improve teaching; (b) the development or promotion of methods to measure effective teaching and learning; (c) support for both face-to-face and technology-based instruction; (c) research in teaching and learning methodologies; (d) facilitation of campus-wide conversations and activities about the university's central mission of teaching and learning (UofL, 2009).

Dr. Gale Rhodes in conjunction with the Faculty Advisory Committee and the Office of the Provost support the overall mission of the Delphi Center; outline the annual plan of teaching and learning workshops; suggest opportunities for professional growth and development, collegial exchange of innovative ideas, instructional and technical support; identify and coordinate print and electronic resources for all forms of teaching and learning; provide greater visibility and accessibility of appropriate resources by all faculty; and promote collaboration among faculty about teaching and learning (UofL, 2009).

According to the Delphi's annual report (2007), the University's content management system (LCMS) hosted 318 online courses in the 2007-2008 academic year and student enrollment almost hit the 7,000 headcount mark. The biggest stakeholders generating course credit hours were: (a) Arts & Sciences, (b) Education & Human Development, (c) Nursing, (d) Social Work, (e) Engineering, and (f) Business. To support the use of the LCMS, the University sponsors "The Blackboard Users Group" as an organization where faculty members share ideas and best practices, ask questions, and collaborate.

The Quality Matters program is a faculty-centered, peer review-based process to certify the quality of online courses and online components (UofL, 2009). The initiative originated at the national level as an online course evaluation rubric based on standards and best practices (NSU, 2009). KYVC began the investigation of this initiative with the partner institutions to create the KY Quality Online Consortium. A statewide training sessions took place at U of L in December 2006; 27 people participated in this session (UofL, 2009).

As outlined in the UofL website (2009) the scope of their distance learning efforts and faculty support policies are as follow:

1. Development and support structures. The Delphi Center supports the University's central mission of teaching and learning through initiatives that support faculty. Examples of year-round programs available through the Delphi Center are: (a) new and effective ways to teach, (b) links between learning styles and teaching strategies, (c) development of effective distance education courses, (d) course and curriculum design, (e) use of technologies to enhance teaching and learning, (f) best practices for the evaluation of teaching and (g) LCMS use.

The Center also hosts the part-time faculty institute each spring and fall semesters. Each institute consists of three sessions. Sessions are available twice a day to accommodate the schedules of part-time faculty members (Delphi Center for Teaching and Learning [DCTL], 2007).

"Camp Delphi adventures in online learning" is a workshop for faculty teaching online courses. The workshop helps faculty integrate best practices for online course instruction, design, management, and evaluation; identify and use effective technology resources in online courses; and use tools for re-purposing online courses.

2. Technology application in traditional and virtual classrooms. The Multimedia Services department in the Delphi Center supports faculty in the development of materials for their courses. The list of available services includes: (a) document, photo and slide scanning, (b) video conversion, (c) video and sound recording for course-related materials, (d) podcasting/vodcasting, and (e) Adobe Presenter.

3. State and institutional evaluation activities coupled with reformed accreditation standards and processes that account for e-learning structures. As of today, the university's evaluation activities and accreditation standards and processes do not treat e-learning structures separately. All institutional data receives the same treatment (G. Vittitow, personal communication, February 17, 2009).

4. Encourage activities that achieve economies of scale and qualitative improvements. UofL's online courses are available via the Kentucky Virtual Campus and the Southern Regional Electronic Campus catalogs. The University of Louisville leverages KYVC's technology procurement efforts to achieve economies of scale. An example is the Blackboard system that is available to all KYVC's participating institutions in the state faculty (G. Rhodes, personal communication, February 17, 2009).

In terms of qualitative improvements, the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) is the regional accrediting body for the University of Louisville. A core requirement of SACS accreditation is the preparation of a "Quality Enhancement Plan" (QEP). The 2005 QEP theme was "Ideas to Action: Critical Thinking to Address Community Problems." The University committed to support faculty to make necessary curricular changes to implement the ideas to Action theme in all programs for 2007.

5. Team approach to instructional design. Faculty that deliver Web and mixed mode courses have access to instructional designers and multimedia developers at the Delphi Center. The Center's Director guides the planning process to support faculty in departments developing Web-based courses and programs.

6. Hiring, promotion, and tenure incentives in exchange for the creation and effective use of digital learning materials. The center awards a Departmental Achievement in Teaching Award of \$25,000 to recognize outstanding departments for implementing curricula and/or creating teaching methodologies that promote graduate and undergraduate student engagement and retention regardless of delivery medium.

The center also awards \$5000 to faculty members for using technology that significantly improves teaching and learning. First place winners receive \$2000 and the next three best contenders win \$1000 each. The center awards a \$500 stipend to faculty members who attend all camp Delphi workshop sessions. Also, first-time faculty members teaching online courses receive a stipend of \$500.

Students enrolled in online courses pay 30% more in tuition fees than their counterparts enrolled in face-to-face sections. The University distributes the additional 30% among the Delphi Center, library, and the colleges offering distance learning courses. It is up to the College to distribute the funds to faculty (G. Rhodes, personal communication, February 17, 2009).

7. Structures capable of managing change to develop, deliver, and sustain e-learning. The Delphi Center for Teaching and Learning facilitates all online learning at the University of Louisville and provides assistance with issues pertaining to online learning, university admissions, or other. The Center is the product of entrepreneurial efforts to self-support its day-to-day operations (G. Rhodes, personal communication, February 17, 2009).

8 - 9. Policies addressing courses and materials ownership - Financial rewards from commercialization of course materials. The University's priority concerning with

materials ownership focuses on patents instead of courses and materials; transactions of course materials do not receive any visibility (G. Rhodes, personal communication, February 17, 2009).

Distributed Agency

Epper & Garn (2003) defined distributed agency VCUs as institutions providing a limited number of services. Distributed agencies exhibit low business practices such as self-sustainability and low centralization. Centralization refers institutions ability to provide limited academic and administrative services to students. The Oregon Network for Education is good example of a decentralized model. In the SREB region, the study authors identified the Mississippi Virtual Community College as a good example of the distributed agency model.

State Board for Community & Junior Colleges (SBCJC)

Mississippi is the first state that established a system of public community colleges. The state has 15 comprehensive community college districts that provide educational programs and services accessible to Mississippi citizens. These institutions began operations in 1922. Both the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools and the Mississippi Commission on College Accreditation accredit the programs available through these institutions. In addition to offering university transfer courses, Mississippi community and junior colleges are the primary mediums for delivering post-secondary occupational programs and workforce education (Walker et al., 2008).

Each college district has a local governing board. These boards employ colleges' presidents and faculty members, own property, establish budgets for operation and capital improvement, set governance policies, approve vocational and technical programs and attendance centers, assemble reports, and provide general coordination. The Mississippi Community and Junior College Association, a voluntary organization of the institutions

represented by their presidents, encourages cooperation among institutions on state-wide endeavors (Walker et al., 2008).

The State Board for Community and Junior Colleges receives and distributes funds appropriated by the Legislature, federal, and other sources through the state governmental organization to public community and junior colleges. The board consists of ten members who are neither elected officials or engaged in the educational profession (Mississippi State Board for Community and Junior Colleges [MSBCJC], 2007).

In FY 2009, the Legislature appropriated out of the state general fund \$7,099,160 to the State Board Community and Junior Colleges to fund the educational technology program. The aim of the SBCJC is to generate significant economies of scale such as, line costs for 50Mbps Ethernet circuits for the community and junior college system, data and video network line charges for bandwidth of 50Mbps, technology positions across the 15 districts, etc (MSBCJC, 2008).

The commitment of the State Board for Community & Junior Colleges is to support the Mississippi Virtual Community College by providing support services such as: (a) content management system or systems with software support, (b) maintain a website with MSVCC information and college resources, (c) provide a common enrollment application, and (d) provide a director of distance education. A common LCMS enables global software updates, facilitates the team development of online courses, fosters a support group environment where members can trouble-shoot and resolve problems (Mississippi Virtual Community College [MSVCC], 2005).

A common enrollment application supporting all community college districts allows provider institutions to announce courses as available, alert colleges when courses

reach maximum enrollment thresholds, a means to host and provider institutions of keeping minimal enrollment records. The director of Distance Education ensures online courses are posted to the MSVCC web page; distributes lists of all MSVCC courses across participating community colleges; assists, plans, measures effectiveness, and recommends changes to MSVCC policies and procedures; and coordinates with faculty, staff, and students (MSVCC, 2005).

Mississippi Virtual Community College (MSVCC)

MSVCC is a consortium of 15 state community colleges that leverage their distance learning resources such as faculty members, courses, support services, and technology to serve the state's population. See appendix E for the list of participating institutions. The mission of the Mississippi Virtual Community College is to provide educational opportunities to individuals in the local community and other individuals beyond those boundaries.

The college's aim is to provide access to instructional offerings through advanced technologies to those individuals who currently cannot take advantage of the offerings of the community and junior college through traditional means and to those individuals who are seeking alternative educational delivery systems (MSBCJC, 2003). The distance learning responsibilities roll up under the Programs Division in the State Board for Community and Junior Colleges. The division coordinates the Mississippi Virtual Community College and online course offerings for workforce training (SBCJC, 2009).

In 1971, Mississippi Community and Junior Colleges adopted the system of identifying courses in all college parallel curricula. A screening committee constantly reviews new courses; every five years, the committee reviews the numbering system. All

universities and colleges receive periodic listings of newly approved courses (State Board for Community & Junior Colleges [SBCJC], 2009).

Students enrolled to take courses from remote (providers) colleges, enroll at a local (host) community college and receive services that include advisement and counseling, financial aid, learning resources, and course credit from the hosting institution. The remote (provider) college is responsible for providing the course instruction (MSBCJC, 2003). Further, all colleges participating in the Mississippi Virtual Community College provide classes through MSVCC at a tuition cost no greater than that of traditional classes (MSVCC, 2005).

Only online courses offered through the Mississippi Virtual Community College get state appropriations. Colleges get compensations according to their roles as host and/or provider institutions for students and courses. All colleges participating in the MSVCC sign an Operational Guidelines agreement that outlines stakeholders' primary responsibilities with the State Board. Additionally, participating colleges adhere to the annual statewide calendar approved by MSBCJC (MSVCC, 2005).

As outlined in the 2005 Mississippi virtual community college policies and procedures, each president from a MSVCC participating college must appoint a Distance Learning Coordinator. DL coordinators serve as college liaisons with the MSVCC and other member colleges and participate in statewide meetings that deal with student services initiatives, accreditation, research, and planning. By default, coordinators join the Distance Learning Coordinators Association. The association is responsible for ensuring the MSVCC provides an effective, efficient, quality educational experience for all MSVCC students.

Provider and host colleges are responsible for serving online students and supporting the MSVCC. The SBCJC's policies for provider colleges include: (a) provide a link to the MSVCC homepage; (b) Chief Academic Officers quality endorsements of their institutions' online courses; (c) support for instructors; (d) for pay purposes, online courses should be part of the normal load for instructors, and, as appropriate, online courses may contribute to instructors' overload; (e) set maximum enrollment thresholds; (f) allocate 50% of the available seats to out-of-district students (MSVCC, 2005).

SBCJC's policies for host colleges include: (a) link to the MSVCC homepage; (b) coordination with provider institutions to validate accuracy of enrollment figures; (c) procedures to serve online students; (d) services to advise and screen potential online students; (e) availability to serve as a testing site for online courses capable of giving full faith and credit to all other colleges (MSVCC, 2005).

Under the direction of the Mississippi Association of Community and Junior Colleges (MACJC), the exceptions and issues committee serves the distance education needs and interests of the Mississippi Virtual Community College. The committee hears cases dealing with established MSVCC policies and operational procedures and cases involving MSVCC policies, procedures, and communication. The committee holds two meetings per year. Committee's decisions are final and can be appealed to the MACJC (MSVCC, 2005).

Copiah Lincoln Community College (CLCC).

The college's vision is to be a leader in education, provide comprehensive, quality learning experiences in a nurturing environment. As established by the Mississippi legislature the community college serves a seven county district (Garner, 2006). Copiah-

Lincoln continues to grow in size and prestige; presently the college occupies a prominent position in the state's educational system with over 3,000 enrollments and a physical plant valued at more than \$35 million (Bates, 2009).

The Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools accredits the college to award Associate in Arts and Associate in Applied Science degrees. Copiah-Lincoln is an active member of the American Association of Community Colleges, the Mississippi Association of Community and Junior Colleges, the Mississippi Association of Colleges, and the Southern Association of Community and Junior Colleges (Bates, 2009).

The College's strategic goals over the next five years include providing regular specialized instructional technology and administrative software training to all faculty members, increasing availability of computer labs across campuses, and strengthening the distance learning and dual enrollment programs by setting policies and updating procedures (Garner, 2006).

The college's department of distance learning extends quality programs and services using diversified delivery mediums that provide access to educational opportunities to citizens from the college service area and beyond, and, in turn reducing the constraints of time and place. Students' assessments of the college's distance learning program are positive (CLCC, 2007).

The 2005-06 school-year assessment reported that 95% of graduating students were either satisfied or very satisfied with the quality of distance learning instruction. The 2007 faculty and student surveys, reported that 86% and 85% of distance learning faculty

members and students respectively indicated that the quality of DL instructional was about the same or better than traditional classroom (CLCC, 2007).

As expressed in Copiah-Lincoln CC website (2008) the scope of their distance learning efforts and faculty support policies are as follow:

1. Development and support structures. Distance learning goals for Copiah-Lincoln Community College are to provide professional development opportunities to faculty members and to support teaching through distance learning. The college offers professional development opportunities and support services specifically related to teaching via electronic delivery. All instructors who wish to teach online must participate in technical skills training. (Copiah-Lincoln Community College [CLCC], n.d.).

The Mississippi Virtual Community College offers three courses at no cost to instructors considering online instruction. Workshop one is six weeks long and is titled: teaching effectively online. The workshop focuses on online pedagogy; offers tours of learning management systems and online-readiness indicator tools; addresses assessment types, resources, and tools; and reviews communication tools for the online environment (MSVCC, 2009).

Workshop two is a three-week course available for professional development credit. The workshop targets faculty members wanting to integrate voice into their lessons to improve interaction. Workshop three is a two-week asynchronous course of the LMS' early warning system functionality. The functionality allows instructors to identify at-risk students based on their criteria such as grade performance and attendance (MSVCC, 2009).

2. Technology application in traditional and virtual classrooms. According to Ms. Julia Parker, Director of Distance Learning, the college's long-term goal is to enable a Blackboard course shell for all instructors teaching classes at the College regardless of delivery medium. These shells, at a minimum, will hold course syllabus (J. Parker, personal communication, March 3, 2009).

Part of the College's Strategic Goals for the next five years is to expand the use of computer aided instruction software into the curriculum, improve Internet speed across campus, implement an online grade book and class management program for faculty use, upgrade campus administrative technology software, systematically replace older PCs, develop wireless capabilities across all campuses, and provide Internet access and projection systems in all instructional classrooms (Garner, 2006).

3. State and institutional evaluation activities coupled with reformed accreditation standards and processes that account for e-learning structures. At the state level, in April, 2003, the MACJC Deans' Association approved and implemented the Distance Learning "Hosted" Course Evaluation across all MSVCC participating institutions. To control the initiative, Chief Academic Officers sign an acknowledgment letter stating that their instructors: (a) have adequate academic preparation to teach courses, (b) their courses follow the uniform course numbering system in MSCJC, and (c) reviewed all pertinent instructor evaluations (MSVCC, 2005).

At the college level, periodic and systematic evaluations provide insight information concerning with progress of the educational process, strengths and weaknesses, and pertinent needed modifications. Regular evaluations include those of students, faculty/staff members, employees, and alumni and are incorporated into the institutional planning routine by the President's Cabinet and the Board of Trustees

(CLCC, 2007). Additionally, each department is responsible for ensuring that course objectives are the same for online and traditional classes. CLCC's faculty members are responsible for overseeing distance education courses and ensuring both the rigor of programs and the quality of instruction (CLCC, n.d.).

4. Encourage activities that achieve economies of scale and qualitative improvements. The state board procures technology tools so all colleges participating in the Mississippi Virtual Community College have access to them. An example is the Blackboard system that is available to all participating colleges and is the official learning management system for delivering courses (J. Parker, personal communication, March 3, 2009). All college courses align with either the MACJC's Uniform Course Numbering System or the MDE Post-Secondary Curriculum Framework to facilitate course sharing among colleges (CLCC, n.d.).

5. Team approach to instructional design. Instructors of courses approved for online development, receive support and development assistance from the Distance Learning Coordinator to include medium-specific requirements and design elements (CLCC, n.d.). The college's distance learning organization consists of two individuals; thus, instructors of distance learning courses own the development of their courses. Assistance is available upon request however there is not a staff of individuals who can assist them in the process (J. Parker, personal communication, March 3, 2009).

6. Hiring, promotion, and tenure incentives in exchange for the creation and effective use of digital learning materials.

Distance learning courses are considered a part of the regular teaching load and may contribute to an instructor's overload, requiring additional compensation. Because

this is a community college, tenure is not available for faculty members (J. Parker, personal communication, March 3, 2009).

7. Structures capable of managing change to develop, deliver, and sustain e-learning. The college's distance learning structure is limited to two individuals (J. Parker, personal communication, March 3, 2009). The State Board provides support services such as: (a) content management system or systems, (b) a common enrollment application, and (c) a director of distance education. A common LCMS enables global software updates, facilitates the team development of online courses, fosters a support group environment where members can trouble-shoot and resolve problems (MSVCC, 2005).

8. Policies addressing courses and materials ownership. The State Board for Community and Junior Colleges policy concerning with material ownership states that each participating college is responsible for the development of institutional distance education policies pertaining to intellectual property rights. Courses developed through SBCJC funding become property of the SBCJC for the common use of the state's fifteen colleges (MSVCC, 2005).

Copiah-Lincoln Community College reserves the right of ownership of all electronic documents, programs, curricula, etc., developed under the auspices of the college. Distance learning courses are considered part of the regular teaching load and may contribute to instructors' overload, requiring additional compensation (CLCC, n.d.).

9. Financial rewards from commercialization of course materials. According to the college's distance learning director, commercialization of course materials is not a

priority at Copenhag-Lincoln College; therefore, the college does not have a policy around the subject (J. Parker, personal communication, March 3, 2009).

Central Agency Model

According to Epper & Garn (2003), virtual colleges and university consortia operating under a central agency model provide direct services to students and facilitate articulation among member campuses. These institutions lead technology initiatives, manage distributed and centralized resources, and focus on achieving goals that increase the efficiency of higher education such as technology and shared infrastructure. Characteristics of these institutions are: high level of centralization and low level of business practice.

In their 2003 study the authors identified the Ohio Learning Network as the most representative institution of this model. However, Ohio is not a SREB member state. After further discussion with both authors, the Florida Distance Learning Consortium emerged as one of the most representative virtual institution of the central agency model among SREB member institutions.

Florida Public Postsecondary Education

As outlined in the State's Legislature Florida's postsecondary system purpose is to provide an education system of the highest quality that enables people to search knowledge and individual development; treats undergraduate teaching as a main priority; offers professional, graduate, and research programs that address state and national needs; fosters diversity of educational opportunity; promotes service to the public; makes effective and efficient use of human and physical resources; functions cooperatively with other educational institutions and systems; and promotes internal coordination and the wisest possible use of resources.

The mission of the state system of postsecondary education is to develop human resources, to discover and disseminate knowledge, to extend knowledge and its application beyond the boundaries of its campuses, and to develop in students heightened intellectual, cultural, and humane sensitivities; scientific, professional, and technological expertise; and a sense of purpose. Inherent in this broad mission are methods of instruction, research, extended training, and public service designed to educate people and improve the human condition (Online Sunshine, 2009).

Section 7 of Article IX of the Florida Constitution established a system of governance for the state university system. The purpose is to achieve excellence through teaching students, advancing research and providing public service for the benefit of Florida's citizens, their communities and economy. All public universities make up the state university system. The board of governors oversees the system.

The board consists of seventeen members and operates, regulates, controls, and is fully responsible for the management of the whole Florida university system. Their responsibilities include: defining the distinctive mission of each constituent university and its articulation with free public schools and community colleges, ensuring the well-planned coordination and operation of the system, and avoiding wasteful duplication of facilities or programs. The board's management is subject to the powers of the state legislature. The state governor appoints to the board fourteen citizens dedicated to the purposes of the state university system.

Florida Distance Learning Consortium (FDLC) The State Board of Community Colleges established the FDLC in 1996 (Peterson's, 2008). The Consortium is a network of 39 public and 27 private post secondary institutions in Florida serving a total of 1.3

million students annually. See appendix D for list of member institutions. These institutions range in size from fewer than 2,000 to over 100,000 students. The individual colleges and universities grant the degrees offered through FDLC (Wikipedia, 2008). Students work with their home campus to ensure that they fulfill the requirements of the degree program (Peterson's, 2008). The FDLC recognizes the autonomy of Florida's educational institutions and relies on the voluntary participation of its member institutions to coordinate its activities (Wikipedia, 2008).

In 2003, the Florida Community College Distance Learning Consortium officially merged with the Florida Distance Learning Consortium (Florida Distance Learning Consortium [FDLC], 2008a). The Consortium receives fiscal and logistical support from Tallahassee Community College (FDLC, 2006) and provides coordination among Florida's colleges and universities in the development, delivery, marketing, and acquisition of distance learning instruction and infrastructure (FDLC, 2008b). The FDLC serves as an advisory committee to the State Board of Education and the Florida Board of Governors (FDLC, 2006).

The FDLC is responsible for establishing operation guidelines and procedures for the Florida higher education distance learning catalog. The state legislature established the interactive and Internet-based catalog to serve as the central point of access to distance learning courses, degree programs, and resources offered by the state's public postsecondary educational institutions. The catalog intends to assist in the coordination and collaboration of articulation and access pursuant to part II of chapter 1007 of the state's legislature (Online Sunshine, 2009).

The Consortium supports the mission of Florida educational institutions and ensures maximum access to education for all Florida residents by using instructional technology to eliminate barriers of distance, time, and place. The Consortium annually licenses learning management systems, telecourses, software, and support services at substantial savings to participating institutions while also looking for opportunities to enter into partnerships benefiting member students and educational institutions. The consortium funds statewide membership and institutional participation in national distance learning initiatives. In the 2006-07 school year, the FDLc saved over \$1M to Florida taxpayers through leveraged purchases of distance- and technology-based tools and courses (FDLC, 2007b).

The Consortium helps develop national distance learning policy and best practices in the implementation of programs and services in partnerships with: (a) Southern Regional Education Board, (b) the Western Cooperative for Educational Telecommunications, (c) American Telecommunications Alliance, (d) University of Wisconsin-Madison, and (e) American Association of Virtual Education. Partnered with the Department of Education, Division of Certification Services, the Consortium develops quality online alternative certification curriculum to train and certify new teachers in Florida's school districts. The Consortium also partners with the Florida Center for Interactive Media in the design and development of web-based resources and online databases (FDLC, 2008b).

All public and private school districts, colleges, and universities recognized by Florida's State Board of Education and accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools are able to join the consortium. Each member institution appoints one representative delegate with authority to participate in all activities and cast a vote if

necessary. Member institutions can change delegates at any time by notifying the Consortium Executive Director in writing. Non-voting representatives also referred to as associates may participate in Consortium activities and serve on committees in an ex-officio capacity. Organizations with goals that are closely aligned with the Consortium's may become affiliate members. Affiliate membership is granted, upon Consortium's delegates positive vote (FDLC, 2008b).

Typically, the Consortium meets quarterly or upon the call of the Executive Director or a simple majority of the Executive Committee. The Committee consists of the Executive Director, Associate Executive Director, Chairs of the Standing Committees, and two at-large appointed members of the Consortium. The standing committees are: (a) Strategic Partnerships and Licensing, (b) Faculty Development and Support, (c) Student Support / Web Services, and (d) Orange Grove Initiative: an online library of free resources where Florida's Educators can search, use, repurpose or edit, and contribute learning resources. The Consortium submits an annual report to the Vice Chancellors of the Department of Education.

According to the Florida Distance Learning Task Force (2008b), the Consortium supports the Florida's Board of Governor's 2005-2013 strategic plan. The Consortium improves the state's distance learning infrastructure. These improvements, in turn, promote student access and support Florida's workforce and economic competitiveness needs, foster world-class academic programs, and meet the needs of local communities. Florida's state university system strategic plan goals are to:

1. provide access to degrees: increase student access to higher education via distance learning. The state university system could reach its goal of achieving the national

average in the number of bachelor degree graduates per capita in the 18-44 year old age group with targeted funding and increased collaboration among member institutions.

2. meet statewide professional and workforce needs: align state university system degree production with the economic and workforce needs of the state. Distance learning fosters the workplace skills and technological competencies that foster innovation in the private and public sectors while providing essential training for adults returning to school for improved employment prospects in high wage and high demand fields.
3. build world-class academic programs and research capacity: improve the value and visibility of the university system degree programs. Using distance learning to attract quality students from around the world and creating strategic partnerships with institutions here and abroad.
4. meet community needs and fulfill unique institutional responsibilities: improve access to continuing and professional education programs via distance education. Provide academic continuity to institutions affected by natural disasters.

The same faculty members who teach on-campus courses at the member institutions often design and teach the distance learning courses. Participating institutions determine who teaches each course and provide ongoing training and support to both the face-to-face and distance learning faculty members. The percentage of faculty members who have doctoral or advanced degrees varies among the participating institutions (Peterson's 2008).

The 2006-07 FDLC status report asserts that the Consortium and its member institutions strive to expand in six key initiatives that promise Florida's postsecondary

students access to quality technology and distance learning courses. The initiatives are as follow:

1. **Statewide Leadership:** the quarterly consortium meetings with public and private member institutions allow learning leaders to share institutional-level successes, lessons learned, identify potential roadblocks that may prevent technology-based change from taking place in Florida. The FDLC leadership helps drive reform by communicating challenges and solutions to state and local stakeholders.
2. **Online Access to Distance Learning Course Offerings:** Florida's postsecondary students have online access to distance learning courses that support their university degrees or meet their lifelong learning ambitions through the FDLC web site. Postsecondary students in the Southeast of the country can access the same information through the SREB's Electronic campus web site. In FY 2006-07 these web sites listed over 12,000 courses and averaged approximately 60,000 hits per week.
3. **Web-Based Repository of Digital Resources ("The Orange Grove"):** the repository stores digital learning resources capable of serving Florida's K-20 educational system and supporting its 230,000 educators. Educators can access the repository to find instructional materials that will help them enhance learning and target different learning styles. The Orange Grove partners with the Library of Congress; Publication of Archival, Library, and Museum Materials; Discover; the University System of Georgia; the College Center for Library Automation; and Florida on Florida to increase the instructional materials available through the repository. The initiative

earned a half million-dollar grant from the Fund for the Improvement of

Postsecondary Education to develop and implement statewide deployment strategies.

4. Leveraged Purchases for Cost Savings: coordinated purchasing of common distance learning products and tools for the state's member institutions.
5. Infusion of Innovative Products: the consortium screened over 21 products for their instructional value and appropriateness. The FDLC only endorses products considered to be of potential value to member institutions.
6. National Leadership: FDLC staff involvement in national groups and initiatives such as EDUCAUSE, SREB and the Instructional Technology Council to bring new ideas to Florida and facilitate change.

University of Central Florida (UCF). The university aims to become the nation's leading metropolitan research university recognized for its intellectual, cultural, technological, and professional contributions and renowned for its outstanding programs and partnerships. The goals that will help UCF achieve this vision are to be:

1. more inclusive and diverse.
2. America's leading partnership university.

The 2008 University enrollment headcount totaled 42,912 full-time and part-time students. The student diversity profile consists of 68% white, non-Hispanic; 14% Hispanic; 9% Black, Non-Hispanic; 5% Asian-Pacific Islander; 3% non-resident alien; and 0.4% Indian-Alaskan.

The Center for Distributed Learning serves as the Virtual Campus for the University. The center is part of the Division of Information Technologies and Resources of Academic Affairs and brings focus to University efforts in Distributed Learning by

providing administrative support for all distributed learning credit courses and degree programs offered by the University.

At UCF distributed learning encompasses instructional delivery technologies such as interactive television and Web-based instruction that provide services to nontraditional, distant, and campus-based students. UCF offers seven undergraduate degree programs, eight graduate programs, and 12 graduate certificates, plus hundreds of courses from all academic areas. The academic credits are the same as credits received for face-to-face classes. The distance learning class section and class registration growth continue showing an upward trend as well as the course sections using the university's content management system.

The distributed learning center at UCF encompasses the use of computer resources to extend and enhance traditional classroom instruction. Each year, the university provides hundreds of courses that have Web components. Many of these courses substitute classroom time with online activity reducing classroom scheduling demands and facility use. UCF features its distributed learning courses and programs through the Southern Regional Electronic Campus which promotes college programs and courses from across the South; and the Florida's Distance Learning Consortium which promotes courses and programs from Florida public colleges and universities. UCF is partners with the Naval Postgraduate School (NPS), Monterey, California. The partnership focuses on the development and provision of a faculty development program for online teaching and course development.

The University of Central Florida supports the following course delivery modalities:

1. World Wide Web (WW): courses fully delivered via Web-based instruction and collaboration with no class attendance requirements.
2. Reduce Seat Time / Mixed Mode (M): courses include both required classroom attendance and online instruction. Substantial Web activity that substitutes some classroom meeting times.
3. Reduce Seat Time / Mixed / ITV Recv (MT): M class with class meetings via 2-way interactive television.
4. Reduce Seat Time / Mixed / ITV-LO (ML): M class with class meetings via 2-way interactive television.
5. Video Streaming (V): streaming digital video Web courses supplemented by additional Web activity, projects, or exams.
6. Two-Way Interactive TV (T): live two-way interactive television courses to selected locations.
7. Reduced Seat Time / Video Stream (RV): may follow some or all of these elements: face-to-face lecture, web, video streaming, and labs.
8. Face To Face Instruction (P): courses meet on a regular and scheduled basis. Classroom attendance is required.
9. Face to Face / ITV-Origination (L): two-way interactive television courses.
10. Face to Face / VS-Origination (LV): recorded class meetings for subsequent video streaming over the Web.

The Center's leadership underwent changes in the months while this study was taking place. Dr. Randall S. Upchurch was the Center's Director; he, then, transitioned back to his faculty role in the school of Hospitality Management. The Center's Assistant

Director, Mr. Bob Reed, became the interim Director. Later, Dr. Thomas B. Cavanagh assumed the Center's leadership. The role of the Center's Director is to participate in the review of current and emerging technologies that can potentially enhance the delivery of academic programs and courses, develop markets, and deliver quality distributed learning programs at UCF. The positions of Assistant Director and Coordinator of Academic Support Services rollup under Dr. Cavanagh's role (UCF, 2008).

As expressed in UCF's website (2008) the scope of their distributed learning efforts and faculty support policies are as follow:

1. Development and support structures. The University of Central Florida provides different courses to help faculty prepare to teach different distributed learning courses. To be qualified to teach distributed mode courses, faculty must successfully complete two development courses. Both courses model how to teach online using a combination of seminars, labs, consultations, and Web-based instruction and require a time commitment that ranges from 35 to 80 hours.

Different university bodies sponsor each course. For instance: the Office of Instructional Resources develop faculty for teaching interactive television courses. The Course Development & Web Services unit develops faculty to teach web and mixed mode courses. The Faculty Center for Teaching and Learning provide pedagogy support and development for any course modality with a strong focus on non-Web based courses.

The Distributed Learning, and Course Development & Web Services units rollup under the Information Technology Resources body headed by the University's Chief Information Officer. The Center for Teaching and Learning promotes excellence in teaching and learning, successful research and creative activities, professional

advancement, and collaborative endeavors. The unit is part of the Office of Undergraduate Studies.

2. Technology application in traditional and virtual classrooms. UCF offers the self-paced faculty development workshop titled: “Essentials” to ensure UCF faculty members have the required basic knowledge to develop and deliver web-enhanced courses; web-enhanced courses use the Internet to enhance the face-to-face class meetings. The Essentials workshop serves several purposes: (a) introduces UCF's online course policies and procedures to faculty, (b) teaches faculty the essential skills needed to set-up and deliver a web-enhanced course using the university’s learning content management system, (c) provides a safe environment for faculty to practice and demonstrate mastery of their newly acquired skills. Additionally, the Faculty Multimedia Center and Digital Image Processing Lab at UCF offers training to faculty and staff of how to use multimedia in classrooms, conferences, dissertations, and the Internet. All sessions are weekly.

3. State and institutional evaluation activities coupled with reformed accreditation standards and processes that account for e-learning structures. UCF’s Research Initiative for Teaching Effectiveness (RITE) supports university’s faculty members in formulating and implementing research on effective teaching practices in higher education. RITE provides university administrators with metrics tracking the impact of distributed learning on students and faculty. Examples of longitudinal research and data are student demographics, withdrawal and retention rates, success rates, student and faculty satisfaction, and student learning styles. Students evaluate instructors teaching all course

types including distributed learning course modalities. A special university assessment initiative is measuring the impact of mixed mode and web courses on student learning.

4. Encourage activities that achieve economies of scale and qualitative improvements. The Florida legislature established the Florida Higher Education Distance Learning Catalog as the interactive, Internet-based central point of access to distance learning courses, degree programs, and resources offered by the state's public postsecondary educational institutions. The catalog intends to assist in the coordination and collaboration of articulation and access pursuant to part II of chapter 1007 of the state's legislature (Online Sunshine, 2009). UCF's distributed learning courses and programs are available to students through the catalog and the Southern Regional Electronic Campus.

Regarding cooperative faculty development initiative, the unit of Course Development & Web Services at UCF continuously looks to develop relationships with other organizations seeking to launch or further their online teaching initiatives. Hence, the school's partnership with the Naval Postgraduate School (NPS), Monterey, California, in distributed learning program development. UCF's partnership with NPS focuses on the development and provision of a faculty development program for online teaching and course development (UCF, 2008).

Regarding quality on distance education, the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools accredits all UCF degree programs. The University's Center for Distributed Learning abides by the general guidelines published by SACS draft policy titled: definitions and guidelines for distance education. The document outlines the general areas that make up accreditation: (a) curriculum and instruction: rigor of program,

appropriate technologies, currency of materials, interaction between student and faculty and among students, (b) evaluation and assessment: assess student success, educational effectiveness, and integrity, (c) library and learning resources: access to library resources and technology support, and (d) student services: financial aid, academic advising, placement and counseling, student grievances, informational materials, and student admission standards (UCF, 2008).

5. Team approach to instructional design. Faculty that deliver Web and mixed mode courses receive the support and benefit of the resources of the following centers: (a) Course Development & Web Services, (b) Center for Distributed Learning, and (c) Computer Services and Telecommunications. The Center for Distributed Learning Director guides the planning process to support faculty in departments developing Web-based courses and programs (UCF, 2008). The demand for the Course Development & Web Services Center's services continues to experience an upward trend. In the not so distant future, it is possible the Center will need to cut back and assess a fee on these services to balance capacity (B. Reed, personal communication, January 30, 2009).

6. Hiring, promotion, and tenure incentives in exchange for the creation and effective use of digital learning materials. Web courses developed through special funding allow faculty the option of a one-course release or a dual compensation contract in the same term the course is under development. In some instances, faculty members get a \$2000 stipend in addition to a laptop for teaching their course (B. Reed, personal communication, January 30, 2009).

Faculty assignments and evaluations of faculty teaching Web courses regularly should reflect the nature of their assignment taking into account class size, number of

sections, and support provided by teaching assistants. Normally Web-based courses are part of the regular teaching load. Faculty members may get release time or overload from the college depending upon the load factors mentioned above and respective college's policies.

Compensation and assignment policies of faculty teaching video streamed courses consider class size and course development time or time for the production of special video presentation materials. Normally faculty does not get release time for development of video streamed course materials. Faculty participating in college experiments to use multimedia in college courses may receive support and some release time for material development.

Faculty teaching interactive television video (ITV) courses get release time to complete the ITV course instructional assignments required prior to teaching the ITV courses for the first time. The work assignments of faculty teaching ITV courses regularly should reflect the nature of their assignment in terms of class size, number of sections, and any support provided by teaching assistants. ITV courses are considered in-load basis. The college may provide release time to the faculty member based upon the load factors mentioned above and the respective colleges' policies (UCF, 2008).

7. Structures capable of managing change to develop, deliver, and sustain e-learning. The Center for Distributed Learning operates the Virtual Campus for the University of Central Florida. The Center brings focus to University efforts in distributed learning by providing administrative support for online credit courses, degree programs, and activities offered by the university. UCF's distributed learning courses and programs

are available to students through the Southern Regional Electronic Campus and the Florida's Distance Learning Consortium (UCF, 2008).

The Florida Distance Learning Consortium leads statewide initiatives and facilitates cross-institutional communication, thus championing the interests of its membership institutions. Ongoing Consortium efforts include: (a) consolidated purchasing efforts of distance learning products, (c) statewide coordination of distance learning initiatives, (d) electronic distance learning course catalog for student access, (e) leadership for national and state distance learning initiatives (FDLC, 2008b). The 2008-2009 Florida education budget allocated \$1.6M to the Consortium Services (Smith, 2008).

8. Policies addressing courses and materials ownership. All UCF courses are the sole property of UCF hence, the University Provost must approve in writing selling, licensing, or distributing course tapes. Recordings of video courses are erased upon concluding the course.

UCF maintains a right to video and Web-based course materials or software. These materials may be licensed by mutual agreement between UCF and the individual(s) who developed the materials and must allow for a minimum of 50 percent royalty to UCF. This requirement is consistent with university and State University System policies regarding textbook authorship and production or patents and copyrights of inventions and works where the university may assert a right or interest if substantial university resources were used in the development or production of the book or invention.

Videotapes, graphics, websites, or software developed by the Course Development & Web Services unit, the Office of Instructional Resources, or other

campus support units may be used to support other courses. However, if a faculty member developed the software or materials, these may be reused only with the permission of the faculty member or appropriate administrator. Further, should UCF reuse the course, the faculty member who developed it shall be compensated by either a reduction in assignment for instance: the repeated course may be considered at one-half its contact hour equivalent in the faculty load, or through financial considerations such as royalties, spelled out in a memorandum of agreement between the faculty member and the dean of the college.

In accordance with the provisions of Article 18 of the Collective Bargaining Agreement between UCF and the Florida Board of Regents, faculty members wishing to sell or license course software or materials must disclose such intentions to UCF's President or designated representative. If UCF seeks an interest in the work, an agreement including provisions relating the equities of the employee and the allocation of proceeds resulting from such work will be negotiated to reflect the interests of both parties. College deans, the Vice President for Research, and the Provost must provide written permission to sell or license UCF courses, regardless of delivery format (UCF, 2008).

9. Financial rewards from commercialization of course materials. UCF maintains a right to video and Web-based course materials or software. These materials may be licensed by mutual agreement between UCF and the individual(s) who developed the materials and must allow for a minimum of 50 percent royalty to UCF. This requirement is consistent with university and State University System policies regarding textbook authorship and production or patents and copyrights of inventions and works where the

university may assert a right or interest if substantial university resources were used in the development or production of the book or invention (UCF, 2008).

education in Louisiana to be the best it can be. For that to happen, each of us must collectively focus on best practices in higher education and support one another in meeting those challenges” (Strong, Terrell, Levy, Clausen, Brame, Bruno, 2008). See appendix G for the list of institutions operating in the Louisiana University System.

The Board’s office of Information and Learning Technology seeks to maximize opportunities for learning for the state’s citizens through effective, efficient, and cooperative use of electronic learning technologies. The goal of electronic learning is to complement and enhance the state’s existing higher education resources. The goal is to support distance education efforts as long as these increase Louisiana citizens’ access to higher education (LBR, 2005).

All state institutions of higher education offering distance education either meet requirements or are accepted for accreditation by the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools or the Commission on Occupational Education. Additionally, all institutions should be guided by the Western Interstate Commission on Higher Education Principles (LBR, 2005).

The board’s policies regarding distance learning intend to: (a) increase access to educational opportunities and ensure quality of instruction through distance education removing place and time barriers; (b) enhance campuses abilities to respond to learner needs; (c) increase educational opportunities while encouraging linkages between Louisiana educational institutions and business, government, and the surrounding community; (d) provide cost-effective service through cooperative development; (e) invest in and support the development of a telecommunications infrastructure; and (f)

minimize and streamline policies for reviewing and approving degree programs available via distance education technology (LBR, 2005).

The Board collects data pertaining to off-campus credit courses offered through distance education for coordination of program, and informational purposes (LBR, 2008). Requirements for degree programs seeking Board's approval are: (a) students enrollment metrics in courses and programs delivered via distance education technologies; (b) compliance with all applicable copyright laws concerning the use and transmission of films, videotapes, recording, or other protected works; and (c) compliance with all applicable policies regulating intellectual property (LBR, 2008)

The Board supports the position that institutions should be able to establish separate fees to cover the costs associated with electronic delivery of credit and non-credit instruction. Fees should be consistent with management board policies and state legislation. The Board of Regents provides guidance for the establishment of fees for electronic delivery of instruction. The Board expects from each institution a single point of contact for reporting and responding to Distance Education issues and activities (LBR, 2008).

Louisiana Board of Regents Electronic Campus

The Electronic Campus provides ready access to postsecondary education to Louisiana's citizens. In addition to increasing Louisiana's viability, growth, and competitiveness, the Electronic Campus permits students to enroll in college courses that count toward a credential and enhance their employability. Since its creation in 1998, the campus has been a resource for more than 250,000 course enrollments, encompasses more than 2,800 online courses, and several complete degree programs. The Louisiana

Electronic Campus is a member of the Southern Regional Education Board's Electronic Campus (LBREC, 2009).

The Louisiana Board decommissioned its Electronic Campus few years back. Now the Board relies on the SREB electronic catalog to promote electronic courses across the state and outside its walls. In spite of that, the Board's role of making distance learning policy recommendations to its member universities remains unchanged (D. Williams, personal communication, February 18, 2009).

Northwestern State University (NSU)

Founded in 1884 and located in the oldest permanent settlement in the Louisiana Purchase Territory. NSU was a national pioneer in electronic education (NSU, 2006a). Electronic learning and distance education are an integral part of Northwestern's role in delivering degree programs and effective services on campus and throughout Louisiana, the nation, and the world. NSU is a member of the University of Louisiana System. The University has the most extensive distance learning program in Louisiana to date (NSU, 2009). NSU's mission is to be a responsive and student-oriented institution committed to the creation, dissemination, and acquisition of knowledge through teaching, research, and service (NSU, 2006a).

The University's highest priority is excellence in teaching in graduate and undergraduate programs. NSU prepares students to become productive members of society and promotes economic development and improvements in the quality of life of its citizens. The University goals are to: (a) create and maintain a responsive, student-oriented environment; (b) provide programs, services, and operations throughout the University of high quality and effectiveness; (c) enhance institutional viability through

effective enrollment management; (d) promote economic development, community service, and an improved quality of life in the region. The University strives to create successful partnerships to promote economic development for the community (NSU, 2006a).

NSU creates and provides learning opportunities that respond to the constantly changing needs of corporations, organizations, and individuals. In the fall of 2003, student enrollment was 10,505. Eighty nine percent of enrollments were for undergraduate degrees and 11% for graduate. By gender, 67% of enrollments were female and 33% male. Enrollments by ethnicity were: 62% white, 30% black, and 8% other (NSU, 2006a).

The Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools accredits the University's associate, baccalaureate, master's, and specialist's degrees. NSU is a member in good standing of the Association of American Colleges and also of the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education. NSU's on-line degree programs are fully accredited from the associate through the masters' levels. Credit courses are available in distance education format, which includes TV telecourses, Internet classes, and compressed video. Courses are eligible for transfer as long as these are from other accredited universities.

The NSU Office of Electronic and Continuing Education serves nine off-campus locations as stipulated by the Louisiana Board of Regents. The office's primary objective is to design, develop, and deliver a variety of educational programs to meet the learning needs of a diverse population. The office organizes and facilitates technology as a vehicle for course delivery and seeks to provide a high quality student learning

experience through comprehensive user training, by expanding the times and places of instructional offerings, and by integrating technological innovation. Additionally, the office facilitates partnerships with other educational institutions, business and industry, and community and public agencies, in order to provide electronic learning opportunities.

The Office of Electronic Learning strives to accomplish the following goals: (a) ensure the technology used is appropriate to the nature and objectives of the academic programs; (b) expand educational opportunities in a financially responsible manner through synchronous and asynchronous electronic learning; (c) provide access to college courses through alternate delivery methods in order to offer educational opportunities to students unable to accommodate a traditional class schedule; (d) provide technical training in the use of e-learning instructional techniques and in the use of associated technologies.

The four electronic delivery modes for instruction available at NSU are:

1. Compressed Video: Real time courses that allow instructors to communicate with remote site sections of the class via two-way video and two-way audio. Instructors and students hear and see each other live from each site.
2. Satellite Broadcast: Classes available to viewers via cable stations.
3. Desktop Video: Synchronous classes. Instructors and students communicate via computer cams, headsets and specialized software that allow instruction to take place in real time.
4. Online: Courses available via the World Wide Web.

NSU guidelines concerning online teaching derive from the learning standards prescribed by the Southern Regional Electronic Board (2006c). As expressed in NSU's

website (2006b) the scope of their electronic learning efforts and faculty support policies are as follow:

1. Development and support structures. Instructors interested in teaching electronic courses must attend a Blackboard Orientation session facilitated by the Electronic and Continuing Education staff. The Office of Electronic and Continuing Education provides appropriate training relevant to the delivery of online courses. Training includes basic computer proficiency, Blackboard navigation, and instructional design principles.

2. Technology application in traditional and virtual classrooms. Northwestern encourages the use of electronic media for course delivery. The university provides technology resources such as smart classrooms and presentation equipment to faculty members so, as appropriate, faculty members integrate technology into their classes (D. Williams, personal communication, February 18, 2009).

3. State and institutional evaluation activities coupled with reformed accreditation standards and processes that account for e-learning structures. The Louisiana Board of Regents, the Management Boards (Louisiana State University, Southern University, University of Louisiana and the Louisiana Community and Technical College System Boards of Supervisors) and all their member institutions worked together to make the college course transfer process easier to understand and to complete with a minimum loss of credit. The Statewide Student Transfer Guide is the result of such efforts. The guide lists General Education college credit courses that can transfer between and among most of Louisiana's public colleges and universities regardless of delivery medium (LBR, n.d.).

The same SREB, SACS, Board of Supervisors for the University of Louisiana System, program-specific accreditation, and Northwestern State University standards to design and evaluate regular courses apply to courses delivered via compressed video, desktop video, satellite, or through the WWW. The Vice President of Academic Affairs oversees the University's course evaluation standards (NSU, 2006b). The Office of Electronic and Continuing Education provides guidelines for the evaluation of aspects of the course that are unique to the online environment (NSU, 2006c).

4. Encourage activities that achieve economies of scale and qualitative improvements. Northwestern University follows procedures established by the Board of Regents regarding cross-institution collaborative programs. All NSU Internet/Web based courses must use the course management/gateway software packages(s) approved by the University. Information Systems hosts all Internet courses on designated secure university servers managed and supported in accordance with the University's approved electronic data processing policies and procedures (2006b).

The Office of Electronic and Continuing Education in collaboration with the Registrar's office include approved courses into the University's class schedules. The Office of Electronic and Continuing Education reports these courses to the Southern Regional Electronic Board (NSU, 2006c).

The university provides a Course Management System to deliver online courses and university email accounts to students and faculty. Academic departments in collaboration with the department of Information Systems ensure that faculty members have appropriate hardware and software to teach online (NSU, 2006c).

5. Team approach to instructional design. Northwestern's Office of Electronic and Continuing Education provides as needed technical and instructional design assistance to faculty during the development and delivery of any electronic course. Faculty members are responsible for uploading and maintaining all course material to satisfy course requirements (NSU, 2006b). The Watson Memorial Library's staff assist faculty members determine availability of online reference materials and resources (NSU, 2006c).

6. Hiring, promotion, and tenure incentives in exchange for the creation and effective use of digital learning materials. Faculty members teaching online courses receive equal treatment than their counterparts teaching in face-to-face synchronous environment in regards to tenure, promotion, and merit (NSU, 2006c). After faculty members, respective college Deans, and the Director of Electronic and Continuing Education agree on developing a course for electronic delivery, the respective College Dean determines whether the faculty member will receive one semester course release for developing the course (NSU, 2006b).

An unwritten policy is to seek monetary supplements via external grants. Grants are a popular alternative to provide incentives to faculty members. Another form of incentive is travel to professional development workshops (D. Williams, personal communication, February 18, 2009).

7. Structures capable of managing change to develop, deliver, and sustain e-learning. The Office of Electronic and Continuing Education at Northwestern State University uses technology to organize and facilitate course delivery. The office provides comprehensive student and faculty technology education while expanding time and place

of instructional offerings and integrating technological innovation. The office facilitates partnerships with other educational institutions, business and industry, and community and public agencies, in order to provide electronic learning opportunities (NSU, 2006b).

8. Policies addressing courses and materials ownership. Northwestern State University Policy determines course ownership and copyright in accordance with policies set forth by the State Board of Supervisors and State Board of Regents. Regarding copyright-protected materials used in compressed video, satellite, or online courses, faculty members are responsible for securing advance copyright clearances in writing. These should be on file with their respective course materials (NSU, 2006b).

9. Financial rewards from commercialization of course materials. This exists in the form of a verbal understanding between NSU and faculty members where NSU has the right to use their course materials and sell it (D. Williams, personal communication, February 18, 2009).

Summary

This chapter examined how four higher education institutions in the southern part of the US are leveraging technology to bring learning to people to meet State's goal of improving citizens' quality of life and took a closer look at the policy construct regarding technology support for faculty. In general, examined states rely on experts to set direction and recommend policy to manage processes and assets that converge with electronic learning. Each institution falls at a different point of the faculty support policy continuum where some are highly prescriptive and others are fairly lenient.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

This study examined the SREB faculty support policy construct at four member virtual higher education institutions representative of the Epper and Garn taxonomy. The literature review revealed that policies regulate educational opportunities that in turn can promote or deter economic progress. Policies serve as mechanisms through which institutions can support faculty in an e-learning environment by helping develop compensation and incentive structures that support faculty members' roles and protect their intellectual property rights. The scope of distance education policies exists at multiple levels and across multiple sectors.

The literature review also revealed that virtual institutions are the product of traditional organizations' efforts to maximize the benefits of new information and communication technologies (Epper & Garn, 2003). Almost each state in the United States has a virtual university initiative established or in the works (Twigg, 2003a). According to Epper & Garn (2003) these institutions exist to provide educational opportunities that help develop a better-educated workforce, improve workers' personal prosperity, and strengthen states' economy. Their taxonomy examines VCUs from two dimensions: degree of collaboration and degree to which they implement business practices. Three research questions were constructed from the literature.

A multiple-case study design facilitated obtaining a better insight and description to answer the research questions. Data for the present study came from semi-structured interviews with individuals in roles that interface with individuals that craft and influence faculty policies in the distance learning context and analysis of document such as: (a) websites, (b) institutional policy documents, (c) institutional and operational documents, (d) institutional press releases, and (e) journal articles.

After reviewing and analyzing the available literature and presenting the data, answers to the guiding research questions proposed in chapter one can be drafted. The study's research questions were:

1. In the Virtual Colleges and Universities Consortia under investigation, how does the faculty support policy construct exist today?
2. In the Virtual Colleges and Universities Consortia under investigation, how has the operation of each VCU influenced the respective institutions' faculty support policy construct?
3. Are there any patterns in faculty support policy characteristics across the four institutions representative of the Epper and Garn taxonomy?

Findings

The Construct As It Exists Today

The faculty support policy constructs illustrates different shades of the policy spectrum at each of the four universities under investigation. For instance, the University of Louisville exhibits a strong emphasis and a strong commitment into devising mechanisms that will improve faculty members' productivity and effectiveness as educators. University's mechanisms encompass various professional development

offerings coupled with funding and technical support. Faculty members are encouraged to apply technology in traditional and virtual classrooms; an example would be the blackboard component available for each class offered at the university. Faculty members' efforts to incorporate technology into the classroom may be rewarded via monetary or technology incentives.

Institutional research metrics make no distinction between students taking online only courses and students taking land or face-to-face classes; reflecting that accreditation standards and processes remain consistent across courses regardless of delivery medium. With respect to ownership of scholarly work, the institution's practices are consistent with those of other public institutions; the university places ownership of course materials in the hands of faculty members.

Copiah-Lincoln Community College leverages the faculty development offerings available through the Mississippi Virtual Community College to develop instructors' technical and pedagogy skill set for teaching in the distance learning context. All instructors must attend at least one professional development session prior to beginning to teach distance learning courses. There are no explicit monetary or technology incentives for instructors teaching distance learning courses or attending professional development sessions besides their regular compensation for the regular teaching load.

The college's five year technology plan stipulates major campus upgrades such as putting projection systems in the classrooms, increasing Internet speed, replacing older PCs, and developing wireless capabilities. The near future aspiration is to have a blackboard component available for each class offered by the college regardless of delivery medium. The college clearly benefits from the economies of scale achieved by

the State Board in terms of technology procurement efforts and support and faculty development offerings as these services, if available, are limited at the college level.

In Mississippi, accreditation standards and processes are closely monitored at the state and college levels with the end goal of ensuring the delivery medium and state collaborations do not deter the quality of education available to students. The Mississippi State Board is the driving force behind policies concerning with quality, professional development, accreditation standards, and ownership of course materials.

The University of Central Florida has the most robust documentation outlining the mechanisms through which school administrators support faculty members working in the university's virtual context. The university formulated a diverse mix of mechanisms to develop and support faculty members technology needs and skill set in the learning context regardless of delivery medium. These range from required to mandatory and some are coupled with either or both monetary and technology incentives.

Teaching effectiveness and metrics tracking the impact of distributed learning on students and faculty members also receive a lot of press at UCF. Florida's state legislature supports activities that achieve economies of scale and qualitative improvements across the university system; benefits such as an electronic catalog designed to serve as a central point of access to distance learning courses and degree programs. Benefits like these cascade to the University of Central Florida and facilitate communication across institutions in the state.

The university's policies concerning with video, Web-based course materials, and software are consistent with the Florida State University System policies. Such policies stipulate that the university may assert a right or interest in those materials if substantial

university resources were used in the development or production of the book or invention. Under special circumstances, the faculty member and the dean of the college draft a written agreement outlining financial considerations.

In Louisiana, NSU facilitates professional development opportunities to faculty members to further their technology and instructional design skills. The university facilitates faculty members' access to technology resources so they can incorporate into their classes. Faculty members teaching online courses receive equal tenure, promotion, and merit as their counterparts teaching in the face-to-face synchronous environment. NSU encourages faculty members to seek external grants because these are a viable alternative to achieve monetary supplements. NSU's course ownership and copyright policies align with the policies set forth by the State Board of Supervisors and State Board of Regents.

VCU Influence on Academic Institutions' Faculty Support Construct

The University of Louisville's strategies are reflective of high centralization and high business practices closely mirroring the Kentucky Virtual Campus' Central Enterprise classification. The University provides academic and administrative services to students and proactively seeks revenue generating opportunities that will contribute to the institution's distance learning self-sustainability efforts. UofL leverages the state's and region's technology to market courses to a wider population; achieves economies of scale via state's procurement efforts; and builds revenue streams for self-sustainability by providing continued academic and administrative services to students.

Based on Meyer's (2002) description of distance education policy in higher education, UofL closely resembles the distance learning policy-free environment.

Meyer's interpretation of the practice could be that the institution does not perceive distance education as a promising initiative. However, after further scrutiny of the institution's operations, it could be argued that a policy-free environment allows the flexibility to implement and discontinue practices that add no value to the DL division's entrepreneurial efforts for self-sustainability.

Copiah-Lincoln CC's operations differ from the Mississippi Virtual Community College's Distributed Agency practices in terms of academic and administrative services available to students. Copiah-Lincoln offers standard academic and administrative services to students while the Mississippi Virtual Community College services to students limits to the course catalog just as the model stipulates. Both Copiah-Lincoln CC and the Mississippi State Board exhibit low levels of self-sustainability as their primary source of funding is through the state legislature.

Based on Meyer's (2002) study of distance education policy in higher education, Copiah-Lincoln illustrates a degree of distance learning policy restricted environment. Using Meyer's interpretation of policy practices, the community college receives policy recommendations from the State Board and chooses to implement, study, or revise the Board's policy recommendations. The CC's specific course of action will likely depend upon how the recommendation fits the college's distance education direction.

The Florida Distance Learning Consortium represents the Central Agency model where the level of business practice is low and the level of centralization is high. The University of Central Florida exhibits high levels of centralization because it provides academic and administrative services to students; its levels of business practice are mixed leaning toward the mid to low end of the continuum primarily due to its current lax self-

sustainability efforts. This practice will change provided the current demand for course development & web services continues with its upward trend. With respect to quality control, the university's strong quality control efforts driven through SACS' definitions and general guidelines for distance education make UCF stand apart from the Central Agency model that stipulates the opposite.

The University of Central Florida illustrates another degree of distance learning policy restricted environment. Using Meyer's (2002) study as a frame of reference, the institution has policies for all eventualities and relies most times on those policies for decision making. UCF seems to follow a combination of the four alternative processes when implementing distance education policy: revise current policies, study the issue, and/or use incentives. Distance learning is part of UCF's strategic plan; this fact reinforces the university's commitment to fostering an environment that favors policy discussion and allocates financial resources to support it.

The Louisiana Electronic campus was the most representative institution of Epper & Garn's Distributed Enterprise model. Distributed Enterprise institutions exhibit high levels of business practice and low levels of centralization. It is important to mention that few years back the Louisiana Board decommissioned the Louisiana Board Electronic Campus in order to eliminate technology redundancies. The Board now relies on the SREB electronic catalog to promote electronic courses and programs in Louisiana and surrounding areas. In spite of that, the Louisiana Board continues making distance learning policy recommendations to member universities to increase Louisiana citizens' access to higher education.

The Louisiana Board operates in a true distributed enterprise model because it aims to facilitate program coordination among member institutions and encourages them to establish separate fees to cover the costs associated with electronic delivery of credit and non-credit instruction. The board provides no academic or administrative services to students. Northwestern State University deviates from the distributed enterprise model in the centralization dimension because NSU provides academic and administrative services to students. NSU's business practice dimension is in sync with the Distributed Enterprise model. An example would be the university's overt effort to abide by the Statewide Student Transfer Guide that facilitates transfer between and among most of Louisiana's public colleges and universities.

Patterns Across the Four Sample Institutions

The University of Louisville, Copiah-Lincoln CC, the University of Central Florida, and Northwestern State University have strong development and support structures for their respective faculty members. All institutions have mechanisms in place to help improve faculty productivity and effectiveness as teachers. The type of reward that may accompany each mechanism varies by institution; the discrepancy could be attributed to institutions' degree of business practices. Institutions with structured self-sustainability initiatives are more likely to have the funds to award financial rewards to faculty members than their counterparts practicing limited self-sustainability efforts.

The four sample institutions have technology plans in place; indicating that, in general terms, this dimension may be immune to the level of business practice and centralization practiced by institutions. The existence of these plans signals academic administrators support in terms of funding and in terms of incorporating technology into

teaching and improving school's infrastructure. However, the type of technology available at each institution varies; differences can be attributed to the level of funding allocated to fund technology.

Although all four sampled institutions have evaluation activities designed to uncover pedagogical strategies, track students' completion rates, and track teaching and learning effectiveness from the students' perspective, the University of Central Florida has the most robust system of evaluation mechanisms in place for their distance learning offerings. UCF is representative of the Central Agency model. Central agency institutions exercise greater management authority than their counterparts in the distributed model. Central Agency institutions report greater success in achieving goals that focus on increasing efficiency by focusing on technology (Epper & Garn, 2004). UCF's evaluation efforts provide university administrators with metrics that give visibility to the impact of distributed learning on students and faculty.

In terms of integrity of degrees granted and quality of education delivered, all institutions have mechanisms in place to guard distance learning degree integrity and act in accordance with guidelines published by regional higher education accrediting entities. Activities that achieve economies of scale are more popular now than before due to the economic crisis currently happening in the US and around the world. Although, newspaper headlines assert the US administration intention is to allocate \$775 billion stimulus package to education (Serchuk, 2009), the fact of the matter remains that higher education budget cuts are real and consistent. This fact gives traction to all VCUs technology procurement efforts aimed to achieve economies of scale while eliminating redundancies and improving technology standardization across their respective states.

The instructional design model for distance learning varies across the four institutions. All institutions have some level of support for faculty members delivering web and mixed mode courses. The University of Central Florida has the most apparent resources and infrastructure in place to adopt a team approach to instructional design with faculty members. However, all four institutions through their faculty development workshops help faculty members become self-sufficient and proficient in the instructional design aspect of their jobs. Financial incentives serve a dual purpose, award faculty members for creating and using digital learning materials and for participating in professional development workshops.

The four sampled institutions have structures in place capable of managing change, developing, delivering, and sustaining e-learning. The University of Louisville and the Northwestern State University represent the central and distributed enterprise models respectively. Their reliance on their respective VCUs ability to develop, deliver, and sustain e-learning is limited; this could be attributed to their self-sustainability tendencies achieved via service and tuition fees characteristic of the enterprise model. Both institutions fund internal organizations to lead the institutions' e-learning efforts. The University of Central Florida and Copley-Lincoln Community College representative of the central and distributed agency models respectively have a mixed approach. These institutions do both fund internal organizations to lead the institutions' e-learning efforts and rely on their respective VCU efforts to sustain e-learning. The mixed approach could be attributed to the degree of collaboration between the higher education institutions, their respective VCUs, and State Boards.

In most states, the State Board drives policies addressing courses and materials ownership. Of the sample institutions, UCF has the most robust processes to handle material ownership and distribute financial rewards. The remainder institutions have policies in place; their approach with respect to material ownership, however, seems to be more lenient and willing to make decisions on a case-by-case basis. As appropriate, the commercialization of course materials could be an opportunity for all institutions, particularly the enterprise models ones, to create revenue streams for self-sustainability.

Implications for Educational Research

The study findings add knowledge to the two primary theoretical frameworks that are the foundation for this study. One, the Epper and Garn taxonomy that classifies virtual college and university consortia based on their level of centralization and degree of business practice. Two, the SREB distance learning faculty support construct that makes recommendations concerning with mechanisms that facilitate faculty participation in distance learning initiatives. The multiple case study design enabled the researcher to navigate the complexity of both frameworks through the current policy practices of four higher education institutions in four states.

This study, in addition to expanding the knowledge of the two frameworks above, combines them with four areas of prior research: distance education, distance education in postsecondary education institutions, policy vis-à-vis distance higher education, and business concepts applied to distance higher education creating a unique contribution to the literature. Current research discussing VCUs administration is limited primarily because these entities are fairly new and also because some State Boards are beginning to decommission them in order to eliminate redundancies and in some instances to

accommodate state funding allocations. This research is a step toward greater understanding of these phenomena.

Although it is not uncommon for policy makers to devise policy mechanisms on a case-by-case basis or to implement distance learning initiatives prior to establishing policy, this study intends to show that all policy decisions have profound implications in the field and should be made with careful consideration. The documented experiences from the four sample institutions should serve as references for other institutions undergoing reviews of their distance learning policy efforts.

Limitations

Personal interviews revealed insightful details not available in written data sources. Unfortunately, the researcher did not have the opportunity to interview individuals in different administrative positions at each institution to gain a deeper understanding of the distance education program at each sample institution.

The collection process of policy documents was exhaustive and the researcher believes collected all pertinent documents from the participating institutions. However, each participating institution facilitated access to their policy documents and practices. As a result, the researcher cannot assert that all pertinent policy documents were reviewed (McCoy, 2003).

Other Findings

The literature indicated that the U.S. Army, Navy, and Air Force announcement of their commitment to dedicate \$1 billion to provide university-based distance education for active-duty personnel and their families assured college administrators a degree of

involvement into distance learning (Noble, 2001). The University of Central Florida and the Northwestern State University cater education to this demographic and as a result their distance learning efforts and initiatives prosper as witnessed in the extent of their distance learning policies and program offerings. At the University of Louisville, a contract with the U.S. Army kicked off the university's distance learning efforts (G. Rhodes, personal communication, February 17, 2009).

In terms of VCU viability, Epper and Garn's 2004 study reported that the majority of VCU leaders saw a time in the future when VCUs would no longer be needed. Information gathered during interviews with the selected leaders indicates that institutions' ability to launch, manage, and support online learning equals if not exceeds VCUs service offerings. Louisiana, for instance, decommissioned its electronic campus to eliminate redundancies. The fact that unless VCUs can differentiate in services they are redundant and vulnerable to elimination remains true in the VCU context.

The review of the literature also revealed that each state establishes its own regulatory structure, which presents special challenges in the Internet era. The regulatory schemes of 56 operational units are remarkably different, ranging from the extremely prescriptive (New York) to minimal (Delaware) and in isolated cases non-existent (Montana) (Kerrey et al., 2000). The same concept of varying regulatory schemes is observable at the institutional level where higher education institutions have enough autonomy to set their own direction as it pertains to distance learning.

Future Research

As in multiple experiments, future research of the Epper & Garn taxonomy should plan for within case replications, two minimum within each subgroup or quadrant, in order to complement the theoretical replications across subgroups or across the taxonomy with literal replications within each group. Additionally, to offset the frequent criticisms that exist against the flexibility that the case study design gives to researchers, a series of quantitative analyses are recommended.

The quantitative approach could begin with validating the SREB faculty support policy construct via a factor analysis; followed by a multiple regression analysis to identify the factors that influence the construct the most. This will help identify the action items with the highest merit that should receive higher education institutions' most attention in terms of policy development and implementation and allocation of funds. A follow-up or parallel study would be the development of a scale that would facilitate rating the quality of institutions' faculty support policies. Institutions' quality ratings would help test for policy differences among independent institutions via analysis of variance.

Study findings revealed that states' leadership plays a central role in setting the distance or distributed learning agenda for their respective higher education institutions. An in-depth analysis of state's distance learning agenda and investment strategies will help gain a better understanding and provide context to the distance learning practices set by each virtual university and its member institutions.

Gathered data indicates that policy makers and higher education administrators are allocating funds to develop mechanisms aimed at making faculty members become

self-sufficient in the distance learning context. However, what is the right mix of faculty support services and faculty development workshops that will benefit institutions' distance learning efforts the most in terms of faculty and student satisfaction and distance learning program prosperity? Limited empirical evidence exists to answer the question and school administrators and policymakers are making decisions and setting the distance learning direction without concrete evidence (Epper, 1996).

Increased access to higher education is one of the cornerstones upon which State Boards funded and continue to fund distance learning. Institutional metrics are revealing that traditional on-campus students are taking advantage of online learning courses more than their counterparts facing time and place barriers. Future research should investigate the reasons traditional students enroll into distributed mode courses as opposed the traditional classroom based face-to-face offerings.

Conclusion

Distance education is a means to link people with learning through the use of information and communication technologies and facilitate access to educational opportunities that students would not otherwise have access to (Baer, Bertrand, Borkowski, Brown, Brownell, & DeLauder, 2002). Virtual colleges and universities are the result of advances in communication and computing technologies that removed time and place barriers for the typical working adult coupled with states' agendas of increasing college participation rates in order to improve citizens' quality of life (Epper & Garn, 2004).

Virtual institutions emerged as entrepreneurial entities outside the traditional chain of command of colleges and universities. For the same reason, pockets of the

higher education community hardly understand and embrace these entities; and, in some cases, regard them as duplication of institutional responsibility (Epper & Garn, 2004). The Epper and Garn taxonomy provides deeper insight into how these virtual entities are organized in terms of academic and administrative services available to students and self-sustainability and quality control efforts.

The day-to-day operations of these virtual entities rely on policy frameworks for guiding its different policy areas, activities, and processes (McCoy, 2003). The SREB devised the faculty policy construct for member states in order to aid higher education administrators devise mechanisms through which they could support faculty members working in the context of distributed learning. These mechanisms exist across sampled institutions. The degree of funding and attention these policies receive varies by institution. In some cases, differences can be attributed to institutions' level of centralization and business practices. In others, differences may be the result of institutions' long term goals and objectives.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: ACADEMIC ADMINISTRATOR LETTER 1

October 8, 2008

<< Participant name >>

<< Participant address >>

<< city >>, << state >> , << zip >>

Dear << Participant name >>:

You are being invited to participate in a dissertation research study sponsored by the University Of Louisville College Of Education (UOL COE) conducted by Carolyn Rude-Parkins, PhD and Kathleen MacKenzie. Your participation would consist in sharing your institutions' documented policies concerned or concerning with distance education faculty support. Examples of policy documents are: institutional policy documents, institutional and operational documents, institutional press releases, and journal articles. The distance education faculty support policy themes are:

1. Faculty development and support structures.
2. Faculty application of technology in traditional and virtual classrooms.
3. State and institutional evaluation initiatives along with accreditation standards and processes of your institutions' e-learning structures.
4. Cooperative faculty development initiatives and cooperative degree programs across institutions.
5. Team approach to instructional design.
6. Hiring, promotion, and tenure incentives in exchange for the creation and effective use of digital learning materials.
7. Virtual institutions with explicit state support that are part of a statewide coordinating and governing board structure capable of managing change to develop, deliver, and sustain e-learning
8. Courses and materials ownership.
9. Financial rewards from the commercialization of course materials

There are no risks to human subjects. As in any research, there is always the possibility of unforeseen risks. The information collected may not benefit you directly. The information learned in this study may be helpful to others. The information you provide will be used to provide insight into the policy constructs that should be implemented at Virtual Colleges and Universities Consortia based on their degree of centralization and emphasis on business practices. This is much needed insight that is currently missing from the literature and that will assist university leaders, policy makers, and faculty in the administration of day-to-day activities at Virtual Colleges and Universities Consortia or academic collaborations. Your responses will be stored in a password protected computer in the students' residence.

Individuals from the College of Education and Human Development and the Institutional Review Board (IRB) and other regulatory agencies may inspect these records. In all other respects, however, the data will be held in confidence to the extent permitted by law.

Taking part in this study is voluntary. By sharing your institutions' policy documents you agree to take part in this research study. You may choose not to take part at all. You may stop taking part at any time. If you decide not to be in this study or if you stop taking part at any time, you will not lose any benefits for which you may qualify.

If you have any questions, concerns, or complaints about the research study, please contact Kathleen Mackenzie, at (502) 472-6289 or Carolyn Rude-Parkins, at (502) 852-0609. If you have any questions about your rights as a research subject, you may call the Human Subjects Protection Program Office (HSPPO) at (502) 852-5188. You can discuss any questions about your rights as a research subject, in private, with a member of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) or the HSPPO staff. You may also call this number if you have other questions about the research, and you cannot reach the research staff, or want to talk to someone else. The IRB is an independent committee made up of people from the University community, staff of the institutions, as well as people from the community not connected with these institutions. The IRB has reviewed this research study.

If you have concerns or complaints about the research or research staff, you do not wish to give your name, or you want to speak to a person outside the University, you may call 1-877-852-1167. This is a 24 hour hot line answered by people who do not work at the University of Louisville.

This document tells you what will happen during the study if you choose to take part. By submitting your institutions' policy documents, you indicate that you agree to take part in this study.

Sincerely,

Carolyn Rude-Parkins, PhD

Kathleen MacKenzie

APPENDIX B: ACADEMIC ADMINISTRATOR LETTER 2

October 8, 2008

Dear << Participant name >>:

You are being invited to participate in a dissertation research study sponsored by the University Of Louisville College Of Education (UOL COE) conducted by Carolyn Rude-Parkins, PhD and Kathleen MacKenzie, Doctoral Candidate. Your participation would consist of participating in a semi-structure phone interview regarding your institutions' policies regarding faculty support in a virtual environment. The semi-structured phone interview will take approximately one hour to complete. You are free to decline to answer any question that makes you uncomfortable. The distance education faculty support policy themes are:

1. Faculty development and support structures.
2. Faculty application of technology in traditional and virtual classrooms.
3. State and institutional evaluation initiatives along with accreditation standards and processes of your institutions' e-learning structures.
4. Cooperative faculty development initiatives and cooperative degree programs across institutions.
5. Team approach to instructional design.
6. Hiring, promotion, and tenure incentives in exchange for the creation and effective use of digital learning materials.
7. Virtual institutions with explicit state support that are part of a statewide coordinating and governing board structure capable of managing change to develop, deliver, and sustain e-learning
8. Courses and materials ownership.
9. Financial rewards from the commercialization of course materials

There are no risks to human subjects. As in any research, there is always the possibility of unforeseen risks. The information collected may not benefit you directly. The information learned in this study may be helpful to others. The information you provide will be used to provide insight into the policy constructs that should be implemented at Virtual Colleges and Universities Consortia based on their degree of centralization and emphasis on business practices. This is much needed insight that is currently missing from the literature and that will assist university leaders, policy makers, and faculty in the administration of day-to-day activities at Virtual Colleges and Universities Consortia or academic collaborations. Your responses will be stored in a password protected computer in the students' residence.

Individuals from the College of Education and Human Development and the Institutional Review Board (IRB) and other regulatory agencies may inspect these

records. In all other respects, however, the data will be held in confidence to the extent permitted by law.

Taking part in this study is voluntary. By agreeing to participate in the semi-structured interview you agree to take part in this research study. You may choose not to take part at all. You may stop taking part at any time. If you decide not to be in this study or if you stop taking part at any time, you will not lose any benefits for which you may qualify.

If you have any questions, concerns, or complaints about the research study, please contact Kathleen Mackenzie, at (502) 472-6289. If you have any questions about your rights as a research subject, you may call the Human Subjects Protection Program Office (HSPPO) at (502) 852-5188. You can discuss any questions about your rights as a research subject, in private, with a member of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) or the HSPPO staff. You may also call this number if you have other questions about the research, and you cannot reach the research staff, or want to talk to someone else. The IRB is an independent committee made up of people from the University community, staff of the institutions, as well as people from the community not connected with these institutions. The IRB has reviewed this research study.

If you have concerns or complaints about the research or research staff, you do not wish to give your name, or you want to speak to a person outside the University, you may call 1-877-852-1167. This is a 24 hour hot line answered by people who do not work at the University of Louisville.

This document tells you what will happen during the study if you choose to take part. By agreeing to be interviewed, you indicate that you agree to take part in this study.

Sincerely,

Carolyn Rude-Parkins, PhD

Kathleen MacKenzie

APPENDIX C: FACULTY SUPPORT POLICY CONSTRUCT MATRIX

		CENTRAL ENTERPRISE	CENTRAL AGENCY	DISTRIBUTED AGENCY	DISTRIBUTED ENTERPRISE
		Kentucky Virtual University	Florida Distance Learning Consortium	Mississippi Virtual Community College	Louisiana Board of Regents Electronic Campus
		University of Louisville	University of Central Florida	Copiah Lincoln Community College	Northwestern State University
1	Development and support structures.				
	Mechanisms to improve faculty productivity.				
	Mechanisms to improve faculty effectiveness as teachers.				
	Instructional technology plan for the institution.				
	Significant investments in technology infrastructure.				
	Senior leadership support for using technology in teaching.				
	Funding.				

		CENTRAL ENTERPRISE	CENTRAL AGENCY	DISTRIBUTED AGENCY	DISTRIBUTED ENTERPRISE
		Kentucky Virtual University	Florida Distance Learning Consortium	Mississippi Virtual Community College	Louisiana Board of Regents Electronic Campus
		University of Louisville	University of Central Florida	Copiah Lincoln Community College	Northwestern State University
2	Technology application in traditional and virtual classrooms.				
	Technology component affecting all faculty regardless of delivery mode.				
3	Strong state and institutional evaluation activities coupled with reformed accreditation standards and processes that account for e-learning structures.				
	Evaluation activities aimed at uncovering pedagogical strategies and technical tools for enhancing learning.				
	Information literacy skills needed in the modern workplace.				
	Tracking completion rate of distance learning students.				
	Tracking teaching and learning effectiveness from the students' perspective.				
	Integrity of degrees granted and level of coherence among virtual universities.				

		CENTRAL ENTERPRISE	CENTRAL AGENCY	DISTRIBUTED AGENCY	DISTRIBUTED ENTERPRISE
		Kentucky Virtual University	Florida Distance Learning Consortium	Mississippi Virtual Community College	Louisiana Board of Regents Electronic Campus
		University of Louisville	University of Central Florida	Copiah Lincoln Community College	Northwestern State University
4	Encourage activities that achieve economies of scale and qualitative improvements.				
	Cooperative faculty development initiatives.				
	Cooperative degree programs across institutions.				
5	Team approach to instructional design.				
	Unbundling faculty functions.				
	Labor contracts.				
	Workload policies.				
	Compensation packages.				
6	Hiring, promotion, and tenure incentives in exchange for the creation and effective use of digital learning materials.				
	Rewards and support for faculty willing to invest time, creativity, and effort incorporating technology into their teaching.				

		CENTRAL ENTERPRISE	CENTRAL AGENCY	DISTRIBUTED AGENCY	DISTRIBUTED ENTERPRISE
		Kentucky Virtual University	Florida Distance Learning Consortium	Mississippi Virtual Community College	Louisiana Board of Regents Electronic Campus
		University of Louisville	University of Central Florida	Copiah Lincoln Community College	Northwestern State University
7	Structures capable of managing change to develop, deliver, and sustain e-learning.				
	Channeling state support to state priorities through individual faculty.				
	Online enablers delivering superior products with significant cost savings.				
	College portals linking colleges with students through virtual campuses.				
	Digital content providers positioned to unbundle content and license learning objects.				

		CENTRAL ENTERPRISE	CENTRAL AGENCY	DISTRIBUTED AGENCY	DISTRIBUTED ENTERPRISE
		Kentucky Virtual University	Florida Distance Learning Consortium	Mississippi Virtual Community College	Louisiana Board of Regents Electronic Campus
		University of Louisville	University of Central Florida	Copiah Lincoln Community College	Northwestern State University
8	Policies addressing courses and materials ownership.				
	Written guidelines on course ownership and course materials.				
	Revenue sharing agreements between institutions and faculty.				
	Institutional ownership of faculty scholarly work.				
9	Financial rewards from commercialization.				
	Revenue sharing agreements				

APPENDIX D: KENTUCKY VIRTUAL CAMPUS MEMBER INSTITUTIONS

Community and Technical Colleges

Ashland Community and Technical College
Big Sandy Community and Technical College
Bowling Green Technical College
Bluegrass Community and Technical College
Elizabethtown Community and Technical College
Gateway Community and Technical College
Hazard Community and Technical College
Henderson Community College
Hopkinsville Community College
Jefferson Community and Technical College
Madisonville Community College
Maysville Community and Technical College
Owensboro Community and Technical College
Somerset Community College
Southeast Community and Technical College
West Kentucky Community and Technical College

Universities and Colleges

Asbury College
Eastern Kentucky University
Kentucky State University
McKendree University
Midway College
Midway College
Morehead State University
Murray State University
Northern Kentucky University
Sullivan University
University of Kentucky
University of Louisville
Western Kentucky University

APPENDIX E: MISSISSIPPI VIRTUAL COMMUNITY COLLEGE MEMBER
INSTITUTIONS

Northwest Mississippi Community College
Coahoma Community College
Holmes Community College
Hinds Community College
Copiah-Lincoln Community College
Southwest Mississippi Community College
Pearl River Community College
Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College
Jones County Junior College
East Central Community College
Meridian Community College
East Mississippi Community College
Itawamba Community College
Northeast Mississippi Community College
Mississippi Delta Community College

APPENDIX F: FLORIDA DISTANCE LEARNING CONSORTIUM MEMBER

INSTITUTIONS

Community Colleges

Brevard CC - www.brevardcc.edu
Broward College - www.broward.edu
Central Florida CC - www.cf.edu
Chipola College - www.chipola.edu
Daytona State College - www.daytonastate.edu
Edison College - www.edison.edu
FL CC @Jax. - www.fccj.edu
Florida Keys CC - www.fkcc.edu
Gulf Coast CC - www.gulfcoast.edu
Hillsborough CC - www.hccfl.edu
Indian River State College - www.ircc.edu
Lake City CC - www.lakecitycc.edu
Lake-Sumter CC - www.lsc.edu
Manatee CC - www.mccfl.edu
Miami-Dade College - www.mdc.edu
North Florida CC - www.nfcc.edu
Northwest Florida State College - www.nwfstatecollege.edu
Palm Beach CC - www.pbcc.edu
Pasco-Hernando CC - www.phcc.edu
Pensacola JrC - www.pjc.edu
Polk CC - www.polk.edu
St. Johns River CC - www.sjrcc.edu
St. Petersburg College - www.spcollege.edu
Santa Fe College - www.sfcc.edu
Seminole CC - www.scc-fl.edu
South Florida CC - www.southflorida.edu
Tallahassee CC - www.tcc.fl.edu
Valencia CC - www.valenciac.edu
Barry University - www.barry.edu
Bethune-Cookman College - www.cookman.edu
Clearwater Christian College - www.clearwater.edu
Eckerd College - www.eckerd.edu
Edward Waters College - www.ewc.edu

Independent Colleges and Universities of Florida (ICUF)

Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University - www.erau.edu
Flagler College - www.flagler.edu
Florida College - www.flcoll.edu
Florida Hospital College of Health Sciences - www.fhchs.edu

Florida Institute of Technology - www.fit.edu
Florida Memorial College - www.fmc.edu
Florida Southern College - www.flsouthern.edu
Florida Space Research Institute - www.fsri.org
Hodges University- www.hodges.edu
Jacksonville University - www.ju.edu
Lynn University - www.lynn.edu
Nova Southeastern University - www.nova.edu
Palm Beach Atlantic University - www.pba.edu
Rollins College - www.rollins.edu
Saint Leo University - www.saintleo.edu
Southeastern University - www.secollege.edu
St. Thomas University - www.stu.edu
Stetson University - www.stetson.edu
The University of Tampa - www.utampa.edu
The University of Miami - www.miami.edu
Warner Souther College - www.warner.edu
Webber International University - www.webber.edu

State Universities

Florida Agricultural & Mechanical University - www.famu.edu
Florida Atlantic University - www.fau.edu
Florida Gulf Coast University - www.fgcu.edu
Florida International University - www.fiu.edu
Florida State University - www.fsu.edu
New College of Florida - www.ncf.edu
University of Central Florida - www.ucf.edu
University of Florida - www.ufl.edu
University of North Florida - www.unf.edu
University of South Florida - www.usf.edu
University of West Florida - www.uwf.edu

APPENDIX G: LOUISIANA BOARD OF REGENTS ELECTRONIC CAMPUS

MEMBER INSTITUTIONS

The University of Louisiana System

Gambling State University
Louisiana Tech University
McNeese State University
Nicholis State University
Northwestern State University
Southeastern Louisiana University
University of Louisiana at Lafayette
University of Louisiana at Monroe

Louisiana State University System

Louisiana State University
LSU Paul M. Hebert Law
LSU Agricultural Center
LSU Pennington Biomedical Research Center
University of New Orleans
LSU Shreveport
LSU Alexandria
LSU Eunice
LSU Health Sciences Center New Orleans
LSU Health Sciences Center Shreveport
LSU Health Care Services Division

Southern University System

Southern University, Baton Rouge
Southern University, New Orleans
Southern University Law Center
Southern University, Shreveport
Southern University Agricultural Research and Extension Center

Louisiana Community and Technical College System

Baton Rouge Community College
Bossier Parish Community College
Delgado Community College
L.E. Fletcher Technical Community College
Louisiana Delta Community College
Louisiana Technical College (with its 40 campuses)

Elaine P. Nunez Community College
River Parishes Community College
South Louisiana Community College
SOWELA Technical Community College

Louisiana Private Institutions

Centenary College, Shreveport
Our Lady of the Lake College, Baton Rouge
Louisiana College, Alexandria / Pineville
Saint Joseph Seminary College, Covington
Dillard University, New Orleans
Loyola University, New Orleans
New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, New Orleans
Our Lady of Holy Cross College, New Orleans
Tulane University, New Orleans
Xavier University, New Orleans

LUMCON-Louisiana Universities Marine Consortium

The Learning Center For Rapides Parish

Bossier Parish Community College
Louisiana State University
Louisiana State University Alexandria
Louisiana State University at Eunice
Louisiana State University in Shreveport
Louisiana Tech University
Louisiana Technical College
McNeese State University
Nicholls State University
Northwestern State University
Southern University at Shreveport
Texas Wesleyan
University of Louisiana at Monroe
Upper Iowa University

APPENDIX H: VISUAL REPRESENTATION OF THE EPPER & GARN TAXONOMY

CURRICULUM VITAE

NAME: Kathleen MacKenzie

ADDRESS: 10600 Findon ct.
Louisville, KY 40243

EDUCATION & TRAINING:

B.S., Business Administration
University of Louisville
1996 – 2000

M.Ed., Instructional Technology
University of Louisville
2000 – 2001

Ph.D., Educational Leadership & Organizational
Development
University of Louisville
2001 – 2009

EXPERIENCE:

Program Manager, Leadership Development
GE Consumer & Industrial
2003 – present

Lead Online Course Developer
University of Louisville & GE Appliances
2001 – 2003

Assistant Military Analyst
ITRII/AB Tech. Group
2001

Online Course Developer (Internship)
University of Louisville, Center for Continuing Education
and Distance Learning
2001

Graduate Research Assistant
University of Louisville, College of Human Development,
Kentucky Real Estate Commission, and Kentucky Council
for Economic Education
2000– 2001

Student Assistant
University of Louisville, Ekstrom Library
1999 – 2000

Accounts Payable Assistant
Res-Care, Inc.
1998 – 1999

Bilingual Teacher Assistant
Brandeis Elementary School & Whitney Young Elementary
School
1996 – 1998

Spanish Teacher Assistant
Whitney Young Elementary School
1995 – 1996

PUBLICATIONS:

MacKenzie, K., Rude-Parkins, C. (submitted for review) *Distance education policy: A study of the SREB faculty support policy construct at four virtual college and university consortia.*