



**Texas A&M Restructuring Distance Ed  
and Closing Continuing & Prof Studies Office  
(Mostly) Chronological List of Online Discussion from WCETDiscuss**

<b>Person, Institution, Date</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Russell Poulin WCET June 8, 2010	<p>Hello WCET members –</p> <p>Texas A&amp;M announced today that it is restructuring its distance education operations. Following the recommendation of an institutional committee, the University will be “transferring the development, management, and promotion functions of the Office of Distance Education to the college deans and placing compliance with regulations and fee oversight under the purview of the Provost’s Office.” The Office of Distance Education will close.</p> <p>Also its Office of Continuing and Professional Studies (CAPSO) “will be closed at the end of the fiscal year because of on-going budgetary and sustainability issues. CAPSO was established in 2006 as a self-supporting, fee-based unit to offer professional development courses. It has been unable to develop self-sustaining education programs as envisioned when it was established. As a result, expenses have exceeded revenue on an annual basis. Given the university’s budget concerns, closing CAPSO is our only prudent and responsible recourse.”</p> <p>You can read the full announcement at: <a href="http://rgs.tamu.edu/research-administration/announcement-june-8-2010">http://rgs.tamu.edu/research-administration/announcement-june-8-2010</a></p> <p>I know that Texas was recently hit with additional budget cuts. It is certainly understandable that distance education can grow to the point where it is more efficient to de-centralized as Texas A&amp;M envisions. I hope they’ve planned this out because I’ve also seen institutions that had to re-centralize later.</p> <p>So how are you doing? Are there discussions of major reorganization at your place? Thank you, Russ</p>
Allan J. Silberstein Nazarene Bible College June 8, 2010	<p>Talk about "old way mentality". If you decentralize the Online Education process it is doomed to failure. It is hard enough to get people to buy into this format of delivery. When it is decentralized the Online Education format will go to the "low level concern" pile. The neglect from that point will be incredible. Texas A&amp;M will lose more money from this action. It is definitely not prudent.</p> <p>AI</p>
Lee Freeman University of Michigan- Dearborn	<p>I think the argument that successful online education can only come from a centralized campus effort is short-sighted and unfounded. There are many schools that offer successful, growing, and respected online programs through a very decentralized approach. Whether they were once centralized or whether they have always been decentralized is a separate issue; the fact that decentralized online</p>

<p>June 9, 2010</p>	<p>education can work is the point. Strong and committed deans will be able to focus their online education efforts to meet their specific needs and goals, thereby making their programs more effective and more successful than under a one-size-fits-all centralized approach.</p> <p>Lee</p>
<p>LeBaron Woodyard (posted by Russell Poulin) California Community Colleges Office of the Chancellor June 9, 2010</p>	<p>Hello all -</p> <p>LeBaron Woodyard from the California Community Colleges Office of the Chancellor had the following observation:</p> <p><i>"Your e-mail made me think of <a href="#">this article</a> from last year. In conjunction with UT's announcement, we may be entering the time of transformation for DE in colleges."</i></p> <p>Nice reference LeBaron. In this article, Educause's Richard Katz (who also serves on WCET's Executive Council), talks about changes in IT management strategies. As LeBaron suggests, distance/hybrid/e-learning units may need to think differently too. Certainly the findings from last year's <a href="#">Managing Online Education</a> survey indicated that 45 percent of institutions reorganized the management of online programs in the last two years and 52 percent expect to restructure in the next two years.</p> <p>That's lots of change in our world.</p> <p>Russ</p>
<p>Keith Lynip Continuing Education at the University of Montana June 9, 2010</p>	<p>Reasonable points, Lee. I would suggest however that not all programs are contained within an academic unit. The continuing need for and benefit of interdisciplinarity in program development would seem to be facilitated better through a centralized office. Certainly that's been the case here. This is not to say this isn't achievable when the academic units run their own online programs. It simply requires a strong collaborative effort between the units to carry it out.</p> <p>Consistency is thoughtful. "One-size-fits-all" is not. And, I would suggest that "Centralized" does *not* equal "One-size-fits-all" in the same way that "Decentralized" does not inherently mean ineffective. These are false dichotomies.</p> <p>Much has to do with that institution's particular circumstances, culture, processes, etc. Each "model" is I suspect not just one model either. It's much more fluid than that, in my experience.</p>
<p>Sharon Goldstein Berkeley College Online June 9, 2010</p>	<p>I would like to add that in the centralized model you can offer services specifically for the online population, insuring that they receive the same level of service from all departments that the onsite students receive. In addition, we can also offer students opportunities for engagement and leadership geared specifically to this distance population.</p>
<p>Sue South University of Arizona June 9, 2010</p>	<p>I think there is too much emphasis placed on either/or scenarios when it comes to the centralization/decentralization debate. There are good arguments for both and both approaches deserve to have their benefits acknowledged.</p> <p>I have been at the University of Arizona for 22 years and have seen the flip-flop between centralization and decentralization in many areas of the university over the years. Generally speaking, we have</p>

	<p>centralized when budgets were tight and decentralized when money was more plentiful and individual units had the resources and flexibility to implement their own (and perceived more effective) solutions. Therefore, from my experience, I believe centralization is basically about efficiency and decentralization is about effectiveness. We don't always get the intended outcome with either, mind you, but I think these are generally the arguments posed by those who wish to see one or the other implemented.</p> <p>I personally believe a hybrid approach is best. I direct the "centralized" unit supporting learning technologies on campus. We are a staff of about 30 and could never stretch our meager fiscal or human resources to support our 37K student population. We depend and capitalize on decentralized resources (both physical and human) to improve and enhance instruction supported with technology. Individuals housed in colleges and departments know far better the nuances and specific needs of their units and are best positioned to provide customized solutions. We leverage these resources collectively in two ways....college liaisons who serve in a split funded position between our unit and the college, and who are housed and exclusively support their college, and with an organized group called Learning and Teaching with Technology (LATTe) which brings together us and others on campus who either support or practice the effective use of technology in education. This group of about 65 shares best practices, collaborates on projects, takes advantage of multiple talents and knowledge bases, and helps solve problems together. Both of these initiatives represent a model that is working very effectively for the UA and allows us to stretch our "centralized" resources across the entire institution.</p> <p>Bottom line is that I don't necessarily think the move by Texas A&amp;M is a "bad" one.....but it is not necessarily a "good" one either. In my opinion, it is more an issue of the support for online education being truly collaborative across the institution rather than silo-ing support in one unit.</p> <p>My 2 cents.</p>
<p>Georglyn L. Davidson Bucks County Community College (PA) June 9, 2010</p>	<p>I echo Sue South's sentiments that a hybrid approach may be a good alternative. Not without problems, but it can definitely work.</p> <p>Since 1994, Bucks County Community College has had something of a blended model in place. We do have a central Online Learning office which is responsible for the LMS and other online technologies, student support (including technical) and faculty professional development (for online teaching &amp; learning). The Academic Departments continue to determine which courses will be offered in which modality (f2f, hybrid, or totally online) and in which session/semester. They determine which faculty will teach and they are responsible for the evaluation of instruction. However, the Academic Departments work hand-in-hand with the Online Learning office in making many of those decisions, as the Online Learning office does a lot of information gathering and data crunching. It really is a collaborative effort.</p> <p>I could go on and on with details, but I think my point is, in many cases, it doesn't have to be an either/or model.</p>
<p>Michael Anderson University of</p>	<p>I agree with Sue on the effectiveness of a hybrid approach. Some student and faculty services such as Help Desk support and even a common learner management system can provide a consistent environment (and efficiency) that minimizes the emphasis on the technology and allows everyone to</p>

<p>Texas System TeleCampus June 9, 2010</p>	<p>concentrate on the learning. However, I would caution against viewing centralization as automatically silo-ing or decentralization as automatically collaborative. I've seen hardened silos on a single campus as well as collaborative centralization. The hard part (as always) is the boundary problem.</p> <p>And Sue, I LOVE the LATTe acronym.</p>
<p>Curt Madison University of Alaska Fairbanks and University of Maine System June 9, 2010</p>	<p>I agree with Michael and Sue that there is a nuanced sense about provision of services and locus of authority that is lost with an either/or view. I would like to introduce the ideas of choice and motivation into the mix.</p> <p>"Centralization" brings some baggage when it is associated with coercion. Units may feel forced to use certain software, stay on a certain schedule, offer only certain courses, etc. Yet the arguments for centralization suggest that all of these are generally good things for the health of academic units.</p> <p>"Motivation" favors decentralization when units can feel the rewards of their own efforts. There is a basic entrepreneurial spirit that energizes discussion if the competitive metrics of headcount and tuition revenue can be associated with individual unit decisions.</p> <p>So, how about if we put it all together. The strength of a centralized body across the institution could be its ability to make the academic units more competitive. If the centralized services reduced the cost of online course offerings from individual units, then the savings could go back to them. Thus academic departments could make decisions to outsource some activities to a centralized cleaning unit to increase their return on investment. Competition then breeds collaboration.</p> <p>In this scenario, the most likely activities to centralize would be the costly student service of multi-campus students, cross-disciplinary programs, enterprise level software purchase, and joint program development among institutions. The centralized unit works in the "long tail of enrollment" while the academic departments concentrate on their core strengths.</p>
<p>Marjorie DeWert Ohio University June 9, 2010</p>	<p>Hello. I've been a lurker on this list for quite some and have learned much. Thanks to all of you who have (unknowingly) contributed to my education.</p> <p>This is the first time I've felt that I might be able to contribute to the conversation so here goes. I'm a newbie so will phrase my post in terms of the questions I'm asking of myself and my institution:</p> <p>"What matters most? Ensuring the best-quality-possible online learning experiences for learners/students. Or, focusing on finding the "best" administrative structures(s) to achieve same."</p> <p>"If appropriate quality standards and checks are in place at an institutional level for design, development, delivery, 360 degree evaluation, and continuous improvement of online learning experiences, is it possible that administrative structures could/should evolve to support same and might these be dramatically different from institution to institution?"</p>
<p>Peg Wherry Montana State University June 9, 2010</p>	<p>I opened a message to reply yesterday afternoon, soon after reading Russ's original post. But other matters were pressing and I find this latest action (at A&amp;M) really discouraging. Centralized vs. decentralized is, at some level, a false dichotomy, as my buddy on the other side of the mountain, Keith Lynip, points out. But those labels ARE useful for naming the extremes of a continuum. While I</p>

	<p>agree with Sue South that some hybrid of centralized and decentralized might be best, I think that saying centralized is about efficiency and decentralized is about effectiveness is also a false dichotomy. In my many years in this field, I have come to recognize that (with a nod to Tip O'Neill) all structure is local. Structures evolve for reasons of expedience, personality, tradition, campus culture, the presence or absence or location of money, and probably even, on rare occasions, spite. Lee Freeman says "strong and committed deans will be able to focus their online efforts to meet their specific needs and goals." Ah but look at the links in that chain of reasoning: "Strong and committed deans." What if not all of the deans at A&amp;M are committed to online education, let alone whatever one may mean by "strong"? And "their specific needs and goals" may not be the best ones for the institution as a whole; specific college needs and goals may not include online education at all.</p> <p>I tend to come down more on the side of centralization, because that is the model that's been followed--sometimes with more consistency, sometimes with less--at the institutions where I've worked over a couple of decades. That said, I am increasingly wary of top-down "visions" for online learning from presidents and chancellors, whether that vision is to advance online learning or curtail it. Most of the time, those efforts are uninformed and ungrounded and too often they are extensions of ego. I am even more worried about this drumbeat of shutting down distance/online learning operations now than I was about the trend 6-8 years ago of launching grand schemes in hopes of making lots of money. In the words of Von Pittman at U of Missouri, who's been in this biz longer than I have, "I liked it better when we [in distance/online learning] were obscure and despised."</p>
<p>Maureen Hencmann New Ventures of Regis University June 9, 2010</p>	<p>Just a thought... Might we also consider that this may be a function of the age of the program and the experience of the practitioners, whether they be faculty or DE personnel? Often, those just beginning might benefit from a more centralized approach. However, as developers from all areas have been continuously exposed to quality practices and have demonstrated the ability to develop within those criteria, less centralization might be a natural progression.</p>
<p>James N Shimabukuro Kapi`olani Community College June 9, 2010</p>	<p>My concern with the "hybrid" approach to IT issues is its inclusiveness -- it's a convenient cover-up for essentially doing nothing and maintaining the status quo. Almost everything and anything can be included under hybrid. And THIS is the problem.</p> <p>The fact that Texas A&amp;M is turning over the DE office tasks to entities already established is a clear indication that most if not all of the tasks have become redundant. Establishing and maintaining a separate bureaucracy simply doesn't make sense anymore.</p> <p>The new technology is so entrenched in today's schools and colleges that it is no longer "new." Just as PCs have replaced typewriters and email has replaced printed daily bulletins and memos, and just as "notebook" has come to mean "notebook computers" instead of paper tablets, the internet and instruction have become synonymous.</p> <p>Thus, the traditional "offices" have evolved to the point where DE is part of standard operating procedures, eliminating the need for a separate DE office.</p> <p>In the past, this change occurred with computer labs. When computers became part of the learning process in the classroom, the computer classroom was born and the separate computer lab became redundant. And the evolution continues as students bring their notebooks to class, obviating the need for computer classrooms.</p>

	<p>The DE office was a stage in the evolution of technology in the teaching-learning process. At this juncture, we may be stepping into a new stage where technology defines the traditional and innovation will take us a step beyond.</p> <p>Current DE office staff ought to shift their focus from defending and preserving their departments to developing a new non-centralized model based on how colleagues in traditional offices and positions will need to use internet tech. This will mean absorption into different campus departments or units, with the aim of working with individuals and small groups within the unit to achieve their goals via the latest tech. In the long run, the need for tech staff will decrease as the unit's members become increasingly tech savvy. And this is as it ought to be.</p>
<p>Michael Anderson University of Texas System TeleCampus June 9, 2010</p>	<p>In my experience, DE programs indeed evolve. When the TeleCampus started, most UT campuses had little experience with fully online courses and benefited from our centralized services. Over the years, we helped them develop local expertise, and the value we offered in some centralized services declined. The operative word is "some," at least according to the campus representatives we met with a few weeks ago. Those campus voted unanimously to continue and to fund the centralized registration system created by the TeleCampus for the multi-campus collaborative programs.</p> <p>The argument to eliminate all central DE services is essentially a "states' rights" position. Why do we need a federal government? To provide services (an army) more appropriate to the "larger" enterprise, and to assure that citizens have the same basic quality of life, regardless of their location. If every department signs its own learner management system contract and creates its own 24x7 help desk, the institution will waste money (although the vendors will be pleased). If every department is allowed to define a quality online course and a qualified online instructor, the institution will do a disservice to some students. Just as DE programs progress, so do departments. There are departments who believe that putting a set of PowerPoint slides in Blackboard constitutes a quality online course. Those departments need a central authority to persuade them otherwise.</p> <p>Don't get me wrong: I'm a big fan of decentralization. But hybrid doesn't mean maintaining the status quo. As Maureen suggested, the "blend" should evolve from more to less decentralization. But that doesn't mean we throw out centralized services that make economic sense and offer value. Curt's argument seems exactly right: allow decentralized departments to outsource to a more efficient centralized operation those services the departments selects. If a centralized operation cannot provide efficiency, the individual departments will. At the same time, insist that all decentralized DE departments meet quality expectations.</p>
<p>James N Shimabukuro Kapi'olani Community College June 9, 2010</p>	<p>Michael,</p> <p>Thank you for your very thoughtful response. Frankly, I think we're in agreement on most of the key points, and our differences are more a matter of perspective than substance. You've pointed out areas of need that DE offices address, and there's no denying the value of that service. However, we differ in our views on the longterm need for this service.</p> <p>I agree with your view that the need for DE office services won't miraculously disappear if the office is eliminated. That is, the need is there, and eliminating the DE office simply shifts the burden to other perhaps more costly and less effective alternatives.</p>

	<p>But in the longterm, what do we really want? I guess the basic question is, do we, as educators, want to see DE offices evolve into ever larger and more powerful units in charge of all online offerings? Or do we want to see them slowly fade away as programs, administrative and academic units, and staff gradually develop their own tech expertise?</p> <p>I'm assuming that a primary goal of DE offices is to empower teachers, administrators, and staff to the point where they can independently make their own program and instructional decisions re technology. I'm also assuming that a sign of a successful DE office is the extent to which its "clients" grow in technological knowledge, skill, and confidence -- to the point where they no longer require constant handholding.</p> <p>When we envision fully digital natives as teachers, what do we see? Will they require the constant assistance of DE office staff or will they be able to function independently and comfortably, within their academic units and their own real-time or virtual classrooms, with the latest instructional tech?</p> <p>Faculty populations are changing, and the pace will become exponential in the coming years. Those who are now thriving have successfully transformed into digital immigrants and will soon be joined by - and replaced by -- increasing numbers of digital natives.</p>
<p>Robert Larson North Dakota University System Online June 10, 2010</p>	<p>It has been interesting to observe the movement of delivery technologies that were once thought to be the domain of distance education. As online enrollments increasingly reflect both residential as well as distance students, residential and distant is becoming blurred. At some point, institutions will not need or have a distinction between delivery modalities. Perhaps the only concern will be: "How do we connect this student with this instructor?"</p> <p>When that occurs, the duplication of administrative functions that often exist on a single campus to support the distant student and the residential student will become evident and perhaps under scrutiny. It seems that the expertise to collect tuition and fees, register students, and advise students functions pretty much the same for the residential as well as the distant student. (All we need remember is the demand that came from residential students to have the same online functionality that was being developed for the distant student.)</p> <p>We are in the middle of an educational revolution or perhaps evolution. It seems that the distance education leadership that exists in most of our institutions will be integral in this evolution helping to shape 'connecting the student with the instructor.' It is a scary and exciting time.</p>

<p>Ellen Waterman Regis University College for Professional Studies June 10, 2010</p>	<p>Interesting discussion..... Here at Regis CPS we are organized to do course development through an enterprise model: everyone does not create and teach their own course, but teams of faculty working with instructional designers and web developers create core courses that all use as the baseline for that content. I think if we were to decentralize we would lose productivity. The number of courses that could be developed in our organization would go down. I would also hate to see the disintegration of the Community of Practice that our Unit has. We are always problem solving together, from the challenges of how to most effectively teach something online to the research and testing of the constant array of new tools that are available. I think our function of always nudging towards a higher level of practice in the arena of the scholarship of teaching and learning would be lost. For certainly in these years in which distance learning units have been operating, a great deal has been gained in that area.</p>
<p>Peg Wherry Montana State University June 10, 2010</p>	<p>I see the same blurring of lines that Robert does but I interpret it differently. Having made a career of providing off-campus and distance education for non-traditional students, I am deeply concerned that the blurring or integration he sees will completely obliterate the need or mission of serving distant students, of extending access to people who otherwise don't have it. It's been hard enough to keep those potential students on the institutional radar through distinct administrative structures. And I must take serious issue with the statement that "the expertise to collect tuition and fees, register students, and advise students functions pretty much the same for the residential as well as the distant student." It generally does not, and when it does, it tends to work against the distant student. Presenting a drop form in person? Yeah, right. Calling a campus office from 2, 3, or even 8 time zones away? It wasn't that many years ago that I heard someone, perhaps at a WCET conference, complain that their online students were required to pay their bills in person at the bursar's office. There is a reason that those separate structures evolved, and service to people who don't live on campus is the main one. That is also something the for-profit institutions know full well. They tailor their customer service to those needs and their success is something we in the more traditional institutions should learn from.</p> <p>The separate distance/continuing education unit has long provided its institution with flexibility to reach previously un-served or under-served learners (not to mention providing additional revenue streams in some situations), and that very flexibility usually has led to the creation of different forms of registration, fee payment, advising, etc. from the mass or industrial processes used on most campuses. It strikes me as singularly short-sighted for an institution to consciously deprive itself of what may be its only means of flexibility.</p> <p>Exciting time in higher ed, certainly. And scary, too, though perhaps I apply that term differently than Robert does.</p>
<p>Pamela Quinn Dallas County Community College District June 10, 2010</p>	<p>As head of a the Dallas County Community College District's LeCroy Center, a large distance education and learning technologies center providing multiple services to our seven colleges and to students through our virtual online campus, our District is both centralized and de-centralized. We try to work together for the greater whole. There's always room for improvement, but the push and pull model keeps us talking together and working toward improvement.</p> <p>My issue with this discussion is that we need to look at some statistics out there. Last I read, the "For-Profits" now have at least 42% of the online student market. The thousands of us in public education share the rest. Those numbers get my attention. The "For-Profit" model is very focused (centralized) and it appears to be working and growing.</p>

	<p>Maybe the discussion needs to turn from what's good for our institutions and faculty to what serves students best. We've been hearing for years that higher education will be moving to a student-centered model. Are we? Are these centralized/decentralized decisions being made on the basis of "What's best for students in this environment?" If not, then I don't think we're asking the right questions. If we don't pay attention to the student trends in online learning nationally and internationally and put student needs and outcomes first, some of us and maybe even our institutions may not be here to discuss this 10 years from now. Remember the saying, "When the paradigm shifts, we go back to zero?" The paradigm has shifted, but are really re-engineering ourselves or just evolving? I don't have the answer, but I hope I'm beginning to ask the right questions.</p>
<p>Ellen Wagner WCET June 10, 2010</p>	<p>Pam, that is a great question. An important question. Thanks for calling it.</p>
<p>Michael Anderson University of Texas System TeleCampus June 10, 2010</p>	<p>James,</p> <p>I certainly agree with you that we live in exponential times. But I'm uncomfortable with the dichotomy you've proposed. Do we need ever-expanding centralized DE units? No. Do we need centralized DE units to fade away? No. I think we need, as Peg wisely pointed out, to build DE that serves students-- and each institution must determine how to provide that service. Pam's centralized/decentralized (dare I say, hybrid) model seems the most appropriate because each institution then defines what is centralized and what is localized, depending on the institution's development stage, culture, and students.</p> <p>Here's an example. Some student services are indeed similar for resident students and distance students: I pay my son's tuition bill online even though he only takes classes at a physical campus. However, students in a program which offers courses from several campuses (and the rationale for multi-campus collaborative programs is that each campus can then concentrate on a local area of academic expertise) must have a common financial aid service. Otherwise, the student who takes 6 hours from one campus and 6 hours from another campus "appears" to be ineligible for aid as a full-time student. Unless those campuses are centrally required to use a common financial aid notification mechanism (although I guess the campuses could revert to calling each other with every add/drop), those students are harmed.</p> <p>And despite my admiration and genuine affection for Marc Prensky, I have come to dislike the digital native/immigrant demarcation. Dave White's visitor/resident metaphor seems more accurate. I know plenty of older faculty members who live their academic (and personal lives) online, who are indeed online residents (and I don't mean in Second Life), and I know plenty of younger students who own every digital device but who only consume and never participate. I don't see age as the discriminator (witness the changing demographics of Facebook) as much as attitude.</p> <p>Respectfully,</p> <p>Michael Anderson</p>
<p>Ritchie Boyd Montana State</p>	<p>Marjorie's questions got me thinking about a recent conversation... Just last week I was asked by a friend about, essentially, what makes a good distance education</p>

<p>University June 10, 2010</p>	<p>program. And of course I rolled out the laundry list of items and criteria that this group is intimately familiar with – good course design and facilitation, responsive and flexible student services and advising, reliable and accessible technology, etc., etc..</p> <p>And then mid-stream I stopped and reminded them that none of these core attributes – not one, imho – is necessarily unique to “distance learning” any more (and many never were!). Different perhaps, but not unique. Okay I’m being a wee bit hyperbolic here, but I think you get my point.</p> <p>The question that follows, if we truly want what’s best for all of our students, is – Why are we so slow to apply these broad quality criteria with the same intensity for our “on campus” offerings? (And I have to add, in fairness, that some institutions do a pretty good job of this.)</p> <p>Many (administrators, faculty, accrediting bodies, etc.) have for years held distance education to a higher standard than on campus offerings, and while this has in general certainly benefitted DE programs, it continues to perplex me that it has taken so long for these sorts of broader questions to get asked with regard to those “campus” offerings.</p> <p>At the risk of sounding Pollyannaish, wouldn’t a truly “strong and committed dean” have a much broader world view about, (to borrow from Marjorie), “Ensuring the best-quality-possible learning experiences for ALL learners/students?” And all the metrics, support, quality rubrics, etc., would already be in place and adaptable to online, face to face, or whatever the delivery mode is? And the dean intimately appreciated the differences - and could discern which services were better provided centrally instead of by the college or department? And had a good idea of how the for-profits do what they do? And..., well, you get the picture.</p> <p>Clearly we are (slowly?) moving toward the time when our administrators (and regents/trustees, and faculty, and program managers, and...) can no longer place these issues in tidy little boxes labeled “distance ed”, “face to face”, “professional”, “vocational”, etc..</p> <p>And that’s a good thing, especially for the learners.</p>
<p>David Lassner (Hawaii.edu) June 10, 2010</p>	<p>And the fun of this is that I have yet another interpretation.</p> <p>I agree that distant learners have challenged every aspect of academic and student support. But I'd argue that the service modalities developed to support distant learners should be available to every student so that special handling is not needed for students who don't happen to ever show up on campus. So my preferred future would have all the mainstream campus service providers willing and able to engage with all students, distant or campus-based, using the flexible and student-friendly tools and approaches often developed and pioneered for distance learning. So rather than deprive itself of flexibility, campuses should be learning from the innovators and institutionally embracing those practices. Just as the LMS is not just for distance learning, so it should go for online library resources, online registration, online payment, advising other than face-to-face, etc. etc. etc. When modern flexible services are just for distant learners, then the institution and the rest of the students suffer.</p> <p>Optimistically yours, david</p>
<p>Anne Moore Virginia Tech</p>	<p>Amen to David's observations with one more twist. The National Academy of Science suggested over 10 years ago that students (and faculty) needed to think critically, pose problems, solve problems,</p>

<p>June 11, 2010</p>	<p>communicate, synthesize information, and more (in other words, the higher order learning outcomes for which we should be aiming) in technology-assisted environments. The technology tools need to be married to pedagogy tools and to other tools/ideas in our teaching/learning toolkits to realize the possibilities and promise of the age in which we live.</p> <p>I think that many folks have described the paradigm shift. The challenge is to make it a reality.</p>
<p>Susan Whitener West Hills Community College District (CA) June 11, 2010</p>	<p>Thank you David, that is the model we at West Hills Community College District are moving to. We realize that what we develop district-wide should and will be utilized for our online and face-to-face students as they access information and services from end devices anywhere. The <b>organization</b> of information and services as well as the <b>ease of access</b> to that information is the key to our students' success.</p>
<p>Jim Picquet Dallas County Community College District June 11, 2010</p>	<p>I am a fifth generation Texan, 9 years into VP of Instruction at the DCCCD LeCroy Center in Dallas and 38 + year administrator in our district. I am disappointed for the larger DL community that common sense in centralized distribution was ignored in this case. We Texans pride ourselves on use of common sense. I think common sense was polecat-waxed and waned to jell-o this time. It seems we had made so much progress with various models of delivery and most have been working quite well now into three to seven generations of policy rewrites and one or more SACS visits. They have incrementally improved and grown in acceptance... even demand by our students. Additionally, it seems such a waste of creative application of DL concepts, ingenuity, visceral/bold application of educational vision to learning.</p> <p>I was recently rereading a <b>1981</b> copyright of The Information Society as Post-Industrial Society by Yoneji Masuda. Masuda was one of Japans futurists that made sense about technology in education, manufacturing and the quality movement of both. He not only predicted but introduces both the Japanese and US to the concepts, but stayed around long enough to make us believe that we had successfully built a foundation that others would not cast aside in financially troubled times. It pains me deeply as a Texan and as a long time supporter of technology and DL systems to think that we could be so ignorant in this State of best practices that we allow UT and A&amp;M leadership to be so deliberately marred. Recovery may take another generation to get to those now in high school before these latest atrocities are corrected by the gen X and other "digital natives" who truly are bonded to technology best practices. One step forward and two steps back the "Texas Political Two-Step".</p> <p>I am truly NOT sorry if this statement of perceived loss messes up your latest boot shine. This feels as devastating to educational progress as the oil spill does to Gulf living.</p>
<p>Phil Ice American Public University System June 11, 2010</p>	<p>From my perspective, decentralization is detrimental to any online program as it makes it that much more difficult to aggregate and effectively analyze data. Retention, progression and student learning are all hot-button topics in academia and all require extremely large data sets for comprehensive and meaningful analysis to occur. There are far too many "best practices" that are based on studies with very small n's. Helping our students achieve meaningful outcomes requires continuous analysis of data streams from institutions and programs; and if possible across entire systems. When we decentralize programs we revert back to silo models in which data sharing becomes highly politicized and more difficult from a technical perspective.</p>
<p>James Shimabukuro</p>	<p>Anne, the paradigm is shifting, but from where I'm sitting, it seems more a shift <i>back</i> to the educator as her/his own best technologist. When computers and the internet barged onto our campuses and</p>

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ushered in the age of internet-enabled DE, the vast majority of educators were unprepared for the new technology, forcing administrators to turn to DE offices. This solution was, from the outset, a band-aid approach to bringing existing staff up to speed. It was never meant to add a second layer of staff and resources to the college or school.

However, over the years, the temporary fix took on permanent features and grew, and the paradigm shifted to a parallel model of traditional staff *and* DE staff, one that no campus could -- or would want to -- sustain over the long haul. It simply isn't cost effective, and it delays or even stifles the technological evolution of staff in existing offices.

While the paradigm has been shifting to a dual model, faculty, staff, and administrators have been quietly but effectively developing their own expertise with the new tech, gradually integrating it into their personal repertoire of professional skills and, in the process, expanding the traditional paradigm of educator as tech.

Teaching has, in a very real sense, always been driven by technology -- with the teacher doing the driving. For example, the university as a forum for interaction between teacher and student has its roots in the 5th century BC dialogues between Socrates and his students. His home, which served as a forum, and his interactive methods were the technological precursors of the university. Campuses, classrooms, desks, chairs, blackboards, and, later, books are all forms of technology that have been gradually assimilated into the teaching paradigm.

When I first began teaching in the 1970s, the xerox machine and the hardcopy handouts they made possible were the latest in high tech. With the addition of transparencies and the overhead projector, a huge TV set with VCR, and access to an IBM Selectric in the department office, I was teched out. As probationary teachers, we were expected to use the latest tech in our classrooms, and our evaluations included these tech skills.

However, with the advent of computers and the internet, administrators suddenly took a different tack, choosing a course that inadvertently led them away from the existing educator-as-tech paradigm toward one that features a dual model that separates educator and tech.

What I'm sharing here right now is based on experience. Over the last ten years or so, I've had the pleasure of working part-time with my college's student services dean who understood the need for her staff to become tech savvy. She knew what she wanted in terms of tech, and she brought in individual consultants and experts as needed, on a part-time basis, to work with her staff in developing the necessary skills and procedures. And these experts weren't always from the DE or IT office. She simply chose the best people for the task. When the targeted staff were up to speed, the consultants were let go. Today, her staff is able to manage most if not all their high-tech needs -- and the wisdom of this sustainable, paradigm-extending model is gradually coming to light.

At Texas A&M, administrators are apparently seeing the same light. Anne, as you, David, and others in this discussion have been saying, the *new* teacher, staff member, and administrator is evolving, and ironically, at least from my perspective, she is evolving in the traditional paradigm of teacher as technologist.

In this transition back to the educator-as-tech paradigm, leadership will play a crucial role. There is no

	<p>way of getting around the need for leaders who understand the ways in which tech can be used to facilitate the work of their staff. The leaders themselves don't need to be tech wizzes, but they need to understand its possibilities and have the imagination, courage, and organizational know-how to implement them.</p>
<p>Tom Wilkinson Virginia Tech June 11, 2010</p>	<p>While poised to retire after 31 years in independent and distance learning in higher education, I have found this conversation quite interesting, and sadly all too familiar. I add to my perspective several additional years of experience in the corporate sector. Therefore, I don't think I am being naive when I say it appears clear to me that we are looking at two separate things here.</p> <p>First, both the Texas A&amp;M and UT-Tele-Campus distance learning program shut downs are budget driven initiatives. I have yet to see any convincing data where the decision makers indicated these were the best solutions for students, faculty, or the institutions, much less a thoughtful review of the timing for a distance education transformation, or the need for a new paradigm. Ask almost any college dean, or president within a system, today if they would rather cut their own budget or take on their college's portion of a centralized operation, whether that operation is distance learning, faculty development, learning technologies, graduate education or whatever. I think the answer would be close to unanimous to take on the additional responsibilities rather than cut their budget to maintain a centralized system. Be that as it may, it happened and its repercussions will continue as other educational leaders look for ways to balance their institution's or system's budget.</p> <p>Second, the debate over centralized or decentralized distance learning organizations will continue, but my belief is, as was stated earlier in the discussion – its local. What works best for one institution may be different for another, and as things change within an institution, that decision may change as well. We are talking about systems in a dynamic environment, and as we all know, variations within systems make the systems operate differently. So times better, sometime worse.</p> <p>At Virginia Tech for the past 12 years the distance education program operated under a holistic model or approach. That is, we did not focus on using technology to deliver education or associated services from one place to another, or to many others. Instead, we focused on education and making it accessible, engaging and meaningful. Specifically, we focused on what is needed to provide the best possible learning opportunity, experience and support to a student, and the best possible experience and support to a faculty to make that happen. We've had what is probably best described as a centralized/decentralized distributed model. Our Institute for Distance and Distributed Learning provides some services, while the colleges provide others, and other university units provide still other services. However, the faculty through their respective departments and colleges, as stated in our university distance learning policy, assume responsibility for and exercise oversight of distance education. This push-pull as Pam mentioned also makes us flexible and adaptive. Our structure helps to explain why 95% of our tradition research university's academic departments are actively engaged in distance learning this year, a strategic goal we met two years early. Why over 70% and rising of the entering undergraduate campus-based cohorts take online courses as part of their campus –based coursework. This has tremendous positive implications on institutional capacity. And, why we had nearly 22,000 enrollments around the world in distance learning this year.</p> <p>So, did the UT-System and Texas A&amp;M make the right move? Is this a paradigm shift? Has centralized distance learning seen its best days? Are we finally going to achieve the promise of technology-based learning? I don't know, but the questions sound all too familiar for me. I used to think our jobs were to</p>

	<p>make ourselves unnecessary; but that seems as far off as it ever did. The decision is what it is. Now we adapt and continue to move on to provide the best possible education to our various student markets. We continue to be adaptive, flexible and learning organizations.</p> <p>What I do believe from my experience is the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Distance learning is not about technology, it's about educational access and learning opportunities and outcomes for people, even if those people are resident on campus. Technology is used to accomplish that endeavor, not to direct it.</li> <li>* Student learning should be our primary cause for being an educator, and particularly so, if we call ourselves educational leaders</li> <li>* There is no one best way to organize.</li> <li>* A holistic approach works.</li> <li>* An institution needs a champion for distance learning, one who is willing to go to the mat for the cause. Someone who wakes up everyday thinking, "How can I make education and its associated services more easily accessible and better?"</li> <li>* Finding distance learning champions for each college within an institution, or each institution within a system will be difficult...., and costly</li> <li>* Eight distance learning organizations will cost more than one</li> <li>* Decisions are often made for one reason and rationale is then constructed to affirm that decision later.</li> <li>* Both centralization and decentralization of distance learning have their advantages and disadvantages. The key is to know what they are and to choose carefully. If you make a mistake, you won't be the only one paying for it.</li> <li>* At the end of the day be happy if you can hold your head high because you've acted with integrity.</li> </ul> <p>Best regards, Tom</p>
<p>Connie Broughton Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges Washington Online June 11, 2010</p>	<p>Hi, This has been an interesting discussion.</p> <p>The trick is to figure out what makes sense to centralize and what makes sense to decentralize. Local control and personal engagement are key to successful elearning programs. At the same time, centralized services can be efficient, cost effective and liberating.</p> <p>Our community and technical colleges in Washington state have a strategic technology plan that promotes a single centralized delivery system for our 34 colleges. Here's the link: <a href="http://www.sbctc.edu/docs/strategicplan/strategic_technology_plan.pdf">http://www.sbctc.edu/docs/strategicplan/strategic_technology_plan.pdf</a></p> <p>Currently, we have a single installation of ANGEL that has full integration to our common student management system. Twenty colleges have branded domains on this installation that they can manage locally. (This centralized service is not mandatory, so colleges can use it in any way they choose—or not use it at all.) We also have an unlimited license for all colleges for Elluminate (also integrated with ANGEL). We are signing a contract for an unlimited Tegrity license for all colleges and building a streaming media server that all colleges can use. The cost savings from centralized purchase and management of these tools is enormous, and use of elearning in our system continues to expand</p>

	<p>at a breathtaking pace.</p> <p>Since we use the same tools, colleges are also able to share professional development opportunities, technical expertise and programming.</p> <p>As Peg said, “all structure is local,” so our structure might not work everywhere—heck, our colleges don’t agree on all the details. But we think our centrally staffed efforts save money and create opportunities for our colleges to provide more support to their students and faculty.</p>
<p>Michael Anderson University of Texas System TeleCampus June 11, 2010</p>	<p>Well said, Tom. Many of your points really resonated with me, especially:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Learning is not about technology</li> <li>* Learning should be our primary cause</li> <li>* There is no one best way to organize</li> </ul> <p>That sounds like a blueprint for a truly effective university, distance or face to face.</p> <p>One small correction. While I cannot speak to the Texas A&amp;M decision, the TeleCampus closure was NOT related to budget (see the UT spokesperson's quote in the final line of this local article: <a href="http://www.kxan.com/dpp/news/education/ut-system-eliminates-its-telecampus">http://www.kxan.com/dpp/news/education/ut-system-eliminates-its-telecampus</a>). The TeleCampus closure could actually end up costing the UT System millions of dollars, although those costs will be shifted from the central administration budget to the campuses (which reinforces your point that, "Eight distance learning organizations will cost more than one").</p> <p>And now come some hard choices. To counter these increased costs, will the campuses cut services to students and faculty? For example, the TeleCampus offered 24x7 Help Desk support of 20,000 online student and faculty enrollments; not a single UT campus offers a 24x7 Help Desk. With DE students and faculty now pushed back to the decentralized control of each campus (where they constitute only a fraction of the total student population--unlike at Virginia Tech), will each UT campus expand its Help Desk to 24x7? Will ANY UT campus expand its Help Desk to 24x7? I doubt it. The campuses will mitigate the cost increases caused by decentralization by cutting student and faculty services. I'm glad that faculty are now tech-savvy because they'll have to find their own answers after 5 pm and on weekends.</p> <p>I continue to champion decentralization. Small pieces loosely joined is just as effective in organizations as it is in Web applications. I believe in helping faculty and students assume as much control and ownership of technology as they want. But I also believe the de/centralized model succeeds because some services (and even some technologies) cry out for centralization in the interest of both efficiency and consistent effectiveness. But no matter what I believe, in the end, one of your points is depressingly honest:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Decisions are often made for one reason and rationale is then constructed to affirm that decision later.</li> </ul> <p>I remain optimistic about the power of online learning to transform lives, but like Jim, I'm no longer optimistic about the future of online learning in my beloved Texas.</p>
<p>Ann Randall</p>	<p>I fear that those making decisions to disband distance education support departments think the role of</p>

<p>Boise State University Distance Ed June 15, 2010</p>	<p>such departments is primarily to teach faculty how to use technology.</p> <p>On the contrary, we do not even allow faculty to participate in our training program to teach online unless they have <b>first</b> completed training in CMS technology. We see the primary purpose of our development program for online faculty is not to teach technology but to provide pedagogical strategies specific to successful online teaching and learning. Most of our faculty participants find the 8-week training we offer to be eye-opening, and many experienced classroom professors tell us that without the training, their online classes would have been inferior experiences for their students.</p>
<p>Allan Silberstein Nazarene Bible College June 15, 2010</p>	<p>Ann,</p> <p>The training program for Faculty is impressive. It is not easy to be an effective Online Teacher- especially with the transition necessary for a traditional format. Is there any chance you would be willing to share your syllabus?</p>
<p>Marjorie DeWert Ohio University June 15, 2010</p>	<p>Ann,</p> <p>Ditto from me per Al's request for your syllabus. Indeed, all of the resources on your faculty support page are impressive!</p> <p>For example, BSU's "Statement on Online Instruction Intellectual Property Rights" strikes me as right on in terms of coverage (of key issues), clarity, and conciseness. I've already shared it with our executive director, Marsha Ham, along with the recommendation that we share it soonest with our Online Learning Advisory Group (OLAG). (One of OLAG's charges is to develop appropriate policies and procedures re: online instruction and IP).</p>