

Report on Institutional Readiness for Online Program Delivery

– 2018 –

**New Mexico
Highlands University**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

New Mexico Highlands University is not unique in its need to move programs online to gain sustainability for the future. What is a bit unique is the fact that it has yet to move to online accelerated teaching/learning in a robust fashion. The institution has now determined that expanding online offerings to a contemporary model of distance education is a survival imperative. While late in implementing the type of online program delivery that students across the nation are used to, the institution is committed to tapping a portion of the available market within its region. While overall enrollment numbers decline, online numbers continue to increase, as is evidenced through annual data collection by The National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) and its Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System ([IPEDS](#)) report and data on postsecondary enrollment in the U.S. With this in mind NMHU needs to move as rapidly as possible into the accelerated, well-designed online course delivery arena. Within this report, the terms Distance Learning and Distance Education DL/DE are used interchangeably with each other and with Online Learning.

After a recent visit and conversations with various stakeholders at NMHU, it becomes apparent that there are both challenges and opportunities for this implementation. Within this report is noted both of those, with a specific focus on maximizing the opportunities and overcoming the challenges in a way that is sensitive to the limited financial resources at NMHU and acknowledges the challenges that surround not only resourcing, but also faculty concerns of quality, workload and training needs. And indeed, it is the former that seems to be the often echoed concern of staff and faculty at the institution. Training on the use of technology. Training on adult learning theory. Training on designing courses to meet learning outcomes, not “seat time.”

Staff and faculty are very much aware of financial constraints at NMHU, but when any who expressed reservations about developing a robust online program were asked, “If you don’t do this, what will you do?” they become somewhat resigned to the need for creating an additional modality in educational delivery at NMHU. Faculty are obviously crucial to the success of any academic endeavor at Highlands. Yet, as in many institutions, the support available to faculty to gain skills and knowledge to succeed in this arena is minimal. There are few options for NMHU to grow on the physical campuses. There is decreased enrollment within the feeder institutions surrounding the University. High schools and community colleges are not increasing their graduation rates sufficiently to feed into NMHU’s enrollment growth needs. Maintenance costs, staffing costs and technology costs continue to rise. And while NMHU has few options, students who want to return to college for knowledge enhancement, retraining or other professional self-improvement DO have options. Most of the options they choose to access currently are online, accelerated, asynchronous delivery that focuses on information and abilities that can be implemented immediately within their professional lives. For this reason, NMHU must find the

resources and the academic cohesion to build just such a program. This report details some recommendations for how NMHU might overcome some of the challenges it faces, while taking advantage of the opportunities that exist for it in distance learning.

Thus, while NMHU needs to gain enrollment numbers in order to achieve sustainability, NMHU has little choice but to identify strategies that will allow it and its faculty to become regional academic leaders in online learning. IPEDs and other regional data demonstrate that online learning opportunities still exist within the Southwest U.S. There are some academic power houses for certain: ASU Online, CSU Global and Western Governors, to name just a few. But, there is room for NMHU to gain sufficient enrollment to support the future needs of the campus, both physical structures and staffing; that is, if the expansion of online delivery is approached using Critical Success Factors and recommendations that are detailed later within this report. The existing extended lecture video delivery mechanism is an incompatible approach for this new delivery modality. Literature is rich with data that supports limiting video interaction to six to ten minutes per topic. In addition, shorter course terms, multiple entry points for enrollment, a focus on learning outcomes and the asynchronous, timely interaction between faculty and students are all critical components of this time-tested modality.

Once faculty understand that meeting institutional goals hinges on successful and scaled implementation of distance learning, the administration can help faculty gain buy in to the strategy. Faculty, staff and administrators should be equipped to execute the implementation with a clear line of sight into goals, sufficient training and incentives (or a lack of disincentives) for change. Despite all the potential benefits to NMHU that distance education might offer, there is little defined strategic direction for implementation at the institution. This report has as its goal, a contribution to that strategic development for a robust and high-quality online learning program.

Strategic growth (for an institution) is not a "build it and they will come" proposition. It requires planning, research, budgeting, resource allocation, and of course, data. (Shriner, 2018).

INTRODUCTION

While overall, post-secondary enrollments in the United States continues to decline, particularly in the for-profit sector, “(t)he number of college students enrolled in at least one online course -- and the proportion of all enrolled students who are studying online -- continued to rise at U.S. institutions in the 2016 academic year, newly released federal data show.” (Lederman, 2018).

As New Mexico Highlands University looks to expand its enrollment, the number of students who can or desire to take courses on campus is shrinking. This is not to say that the current programs do not serve an educational, cultural and valuable needs within its geographic area. There is a regional student population at or near NMHU that needs the type of support and contact that a face-to-face (F2F) program and institutional structure can deliver. These students require that structure to succeed. However, NMHU, at its peril, fails to serve a population of adult learners who cannot or will not attend class on campus or at one of its campus centers.

Regional first-generation students will benefit from that F2F contact, while more experienced and mature students are known to be more disciplined and able to function within an accelerated online program; particularly if programs offered are for graduate students who are often adult-learners. It is this target audience that is recommended for NMHU as the primary target to which the University should market a redesigned delivery modality. The word “redesigned” is important here because current offerings at NMHU consist of primarily synchronous video, with some flipped classroom components. Again, this delivery modality seems to be working well for some specific student populations. However, it is not what NMHU proposes to implement with this expanded online venture. Some **Critical Success Factors**, to be cited later in this report, do not support extended video as an effective course delivery modality within an accelerated online asynchronous environment.

It is unfortunate that NMHU is late into this very well-defined national online realm. Other institutions have been delivering here for decades. That should not deter NMHU though. There is still market-share to be garnered for a new regional public institutional entry into the online education environment. Perhaps not nearly as much as in previous decades, but enough to make a quality NMHU online program viable. Sufficient regional market share exists within this environment. In fact, the most recent release of IPEDS data, which includes 2016 enrollments, shows much of the growth in online is now continuing outside of the for-profit sector. The national IPEDs data shows that, while college enrollment overall continues to decline, there is still growth in online programs and more importantly, growth in online at public universities.

Nationally, the data shows all enrollments dropping off from 20.5 million students to 20.46 million. **(see Table #1)**. Not a dramatic decline in national numbers. But for specific institutions, the decrease has led to shuttering the physical campuses. Students who enrolled in at least one

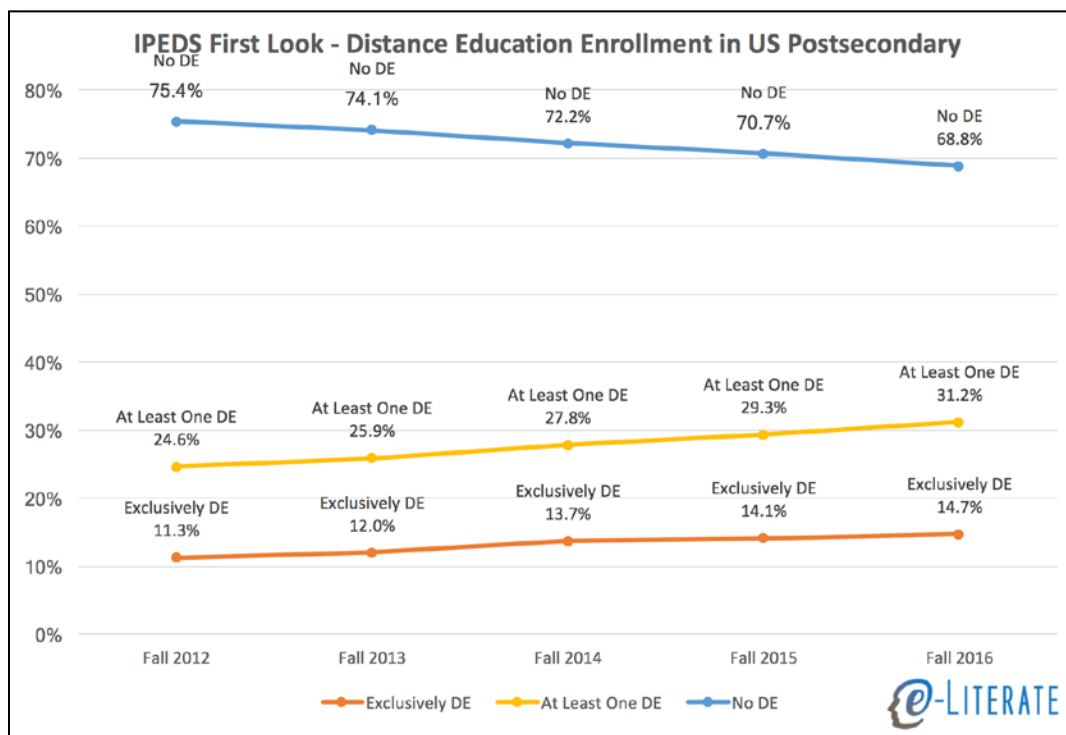
online course continued to grow from 2012-2015. And new 2016 IPEDs data just released in 2018 show that growth trend continuing to nearly a third of all student enrolled in post-secondary classes during 2016. Students enrolled exclusively in distance courses has grown by 77% since 2012 and still showed an increase of nearly 104 thousand enrollments from 2015 to 2016.

As well, according to Phil Hill in the online education blog, [e-Literate](#), including the 2016 IPEDs data in the national analysis show:

- There appears to be an small but noticeable acceleration in the growth of DE, going from 1.5% increase in percentage of students taking at least one online course from Fall 2014 to 2015, and a 1.9% increase from Fall 2015 to 2016. Although not shown in these tables, the acceleration appears in both undergraduate and graduate programs.
- In the four-year period from Fall 2012 to Fall 2016, the share of students taking at least one online course **increased by 27% (from 24.6% to 31.2%)**. (*emphasis added*).

(Hill, 2018)

Hill also presents his analysis graphically and you can see the decline of enrollment without distance education, the increase with at least one online course and the continued growth of enrollments with an exclusively online program:



(Hill, 2018)

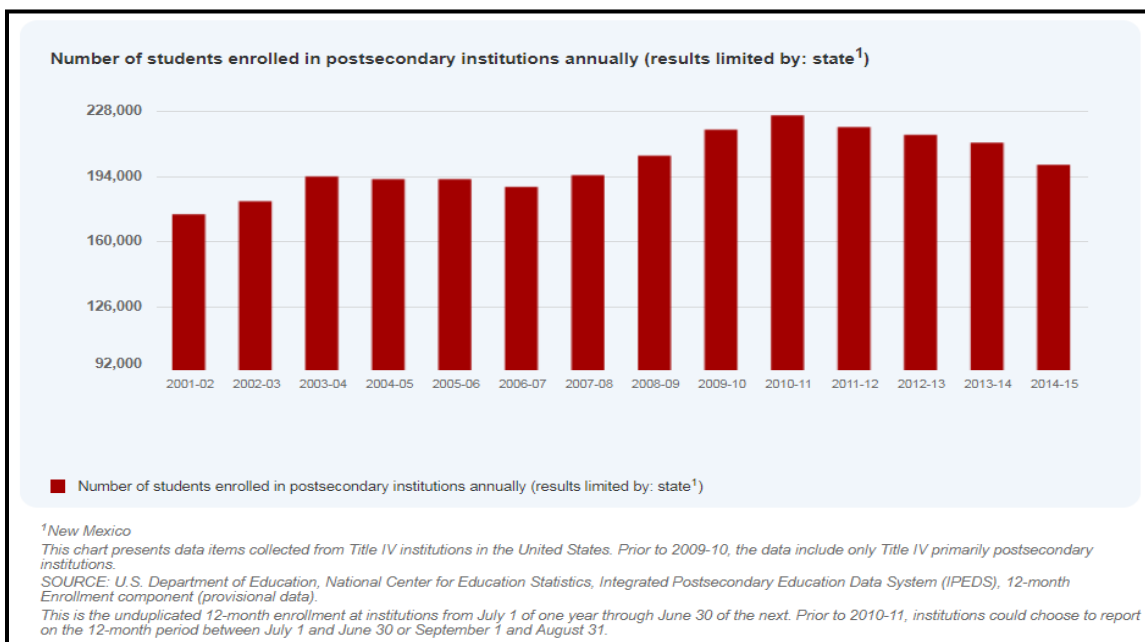
Table #1, 4-year institutions only

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
All Students	20,511,849	20,454,336	20,637,987	20,536,231	20,464,608
Students Not Enrolled in Any Distance Courses	15,425,940	15,157,495	14,885,489	14,547,400	14,124,317
Students Enrolled in at Least One Distance Course	5,085,909	5,296,841	5,752,498	5,988,831	6,340,291
Proportion of All Students Who Are Enrolled in at Least One Distance Course	24.8%	25.9%	27.9%	29.2%	31%
Students Enrolled Exclusively in Distance Courses	2,310,056	2,427,504	2,804,867	2,873,144	2,983,075
Students Enrolled in Some (but Not All) Distance Courses	2,775,853	2,869,337	2,947,631	3,115,687	3,357,216

(Lederman, 2018).

While the national numbers are positive for online delivery, overall enrollment numbers in New Mexico mirror the trend of overall declining enrollment numbers, as is shown in **Chart #1**. With the 2010-11 academic year as a high point of 225,197, the 2014-15 enrollment dropped to 199,004, after showing slow declines each year since that high point, with an overall drop of 11.6%. While these are total enrollment numbers, graduate online growth is showing some energy in some NM locations and NM's graduate online environment contains some contrasting stories for online graduate delivery. (U.S. DoE, 2018).

Chart #1



(IPEDs data, analyzed 12/2017)

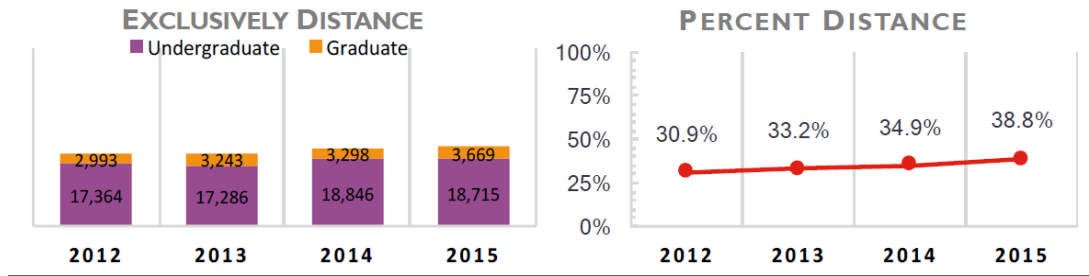
There are only eight campuses in the state that have a measurable online presence for graduate enrollment as of 2015. This includes NMHU. Other campuses have either no online programs or programs with less than 1% of the graduate student enrollment online. The seven remaining campuses could therefore be direct competition for NMHU are highlighted in the far left column of **Table #2**.

Table #2

Percent of students enrolled...	GR some 2012	GR some 2013	GR some 2014	GR some 2015	GR none 2012	GR none 2013	GR none 2014	GR none 2015	GR DL 2012	GR DL 2013	GR DL 2014	GR DL 2015
University of New Mexico- Main Campus	9%	10%	8%	9%	87%	86%	87%	87%	5%	5%	5%	4%
New Mexico Institute of Mining and Technology	32%	24%	4%	5%	68%	65%	78%	83%		11%	18%	12%
University of Phoenix- New Mexico	1%	2%	5%	8%	99%	98%	87%	79%			8%	13%
New Mexico State University-Main Campus	14%	12%	15%	15%	55%	58%	61%	59%	32%	30%	24%	26%
New Mexico Highlands University	16%	13%	18%	17%	68%	67%	61%	53%	17%	20%	21%	31%
Eastern New Mexico University-Main Campus	11%	10%	10%	24%	36%	33%	28%	4%	53%	58%	62%	72%
Western New Mexico University	10%	13%	13%	21%	42%	39%	23%	2%	48%	48%	64%	77%
Northern New Mexico College	41%	29%			47%	57%			13%	14%		

(IPEDs data, analyzed 12/2017)

Chart #2



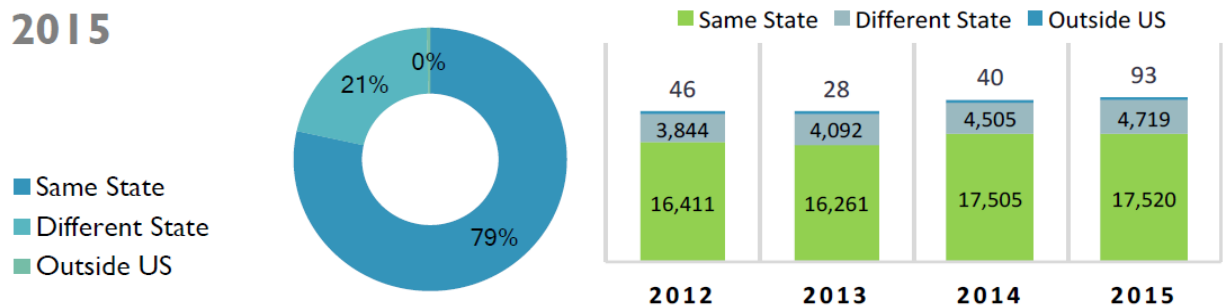
(Babson: Distance Education New Mexico State Almanac 2017.)

The regional market for distance education continues growth historically, as shown above in **Chart #2** and continues to grow in the additional data shown below.

As shown in **Chart #3**, with growing regional interest in online learning, NMHU stands to achieve some enrollment growth on a regional basis, which should support not only an expanding online program, but the physical main campus and campus centers as well. Likely, there will not be the level of enrollment growth realized by institutions that ventured into online education much earlier. However, the good news is that students who are not physically near a NM campus are still very interested in attending a NM public post-secondary institution. **Chart #3** shows the current Babson Survey data on student location for enrollment. Regional enrollment is growing in the state.

Chart #3

Exclusively Distance Student Locations



(Babson: Distance Education New Mexico State Almanac 2017.)

Data gathered by Babson through its annual survey tells a slightly different story than the IPEDs data. However, the overall trends in distance learning remain evident in this data, as well as with the IPEDs data. While the Babson survey analysis shows only four institutions in NM that have measurable graduate enrollment, those campuses have a larger undergrad enrollment and score higher in the state top ten. Growth wise, NNHU remains within this top ten for state DL enrollment growth as of 2015, coming in at number seven in **Table #3**. Eastern NMU's main campus shows a growth in online program enrollments for graduate students from 53% of the student population in 2012, to 72% in 2015.

Table #3: Distance Enrollment in New Mexico

Top 10 Institutions by Distance Enrollment - 2015					
Rank	Institution	Total	Undergrad	Graduate	Control
1	Central New Mexico Community College	8,557	8,557	0	Public
2	University of New Mexico-Main Campus	8,059	7,286	773	Public
3	New Mexico State University-Main Campus	6,013	4,801	1,212	Public
4	Eastern New Mexico University-Main Campus	5,438	4,328	1,110	Public
5	New Mexico State University-Dona Ana	3,155	3,155	0	Public
6	New Mexico Junior College	2,923	2,923	0	Public
7	San Juan College	2,871	2,871	0	Public
8	Western New Mexico University	2,065	1,201	864	Public
9	Santa Fe Community College	1,622	1,622	0	Public
10	Clovis Community College	1,369	1,369	0	Public

Top 10 Institutions by Distance Enrollment Growth 2012-2015					
Rank	Institution	2012	2015	Change	Control
1	Eastern New Mexico University-Main Campus	3,143	5,438	2,295	Public
2	University of New Mexico-Main Campus	6,732	8,059	1,327	Public
3	New Mexico Junior College	1,690	2,923	1,233	Public
4	Central New Mexico Community College	7,704	8,557	853	Public
5	Western New Mexico University	1,267	2,065	798	Public
6	University of New Mexico-Valencia County Campus	728	1,267	539	Public
7	New Mexico Highlands University	932	1,349	417	Public
8	University of the Southwest	475	835	360	Private not-for-profit
9	Santa Fe Community College	1,330	1,622	292	Public
10	University of Phoenix-New Mexico	54	335	281	Private for-profit

(Babson: Distance Education New Mexico State Almanac 2017.)

Babson survey data shows an enrollment share of 20% for DL courses at Eastern. For online learning, the news is good for NM. Online enrollment grew by 11.0% between 2012 and 2015. NMHU is in the top 10 within this time frame, coming in at number seven in distance enrollment growth. So the news for NMHU is good as well. NMHU is not just starting distance education, merely updating and improving the current distance educational endeavor. Thus, there is both a strong base and reputation for NMHU to build upon regionally.

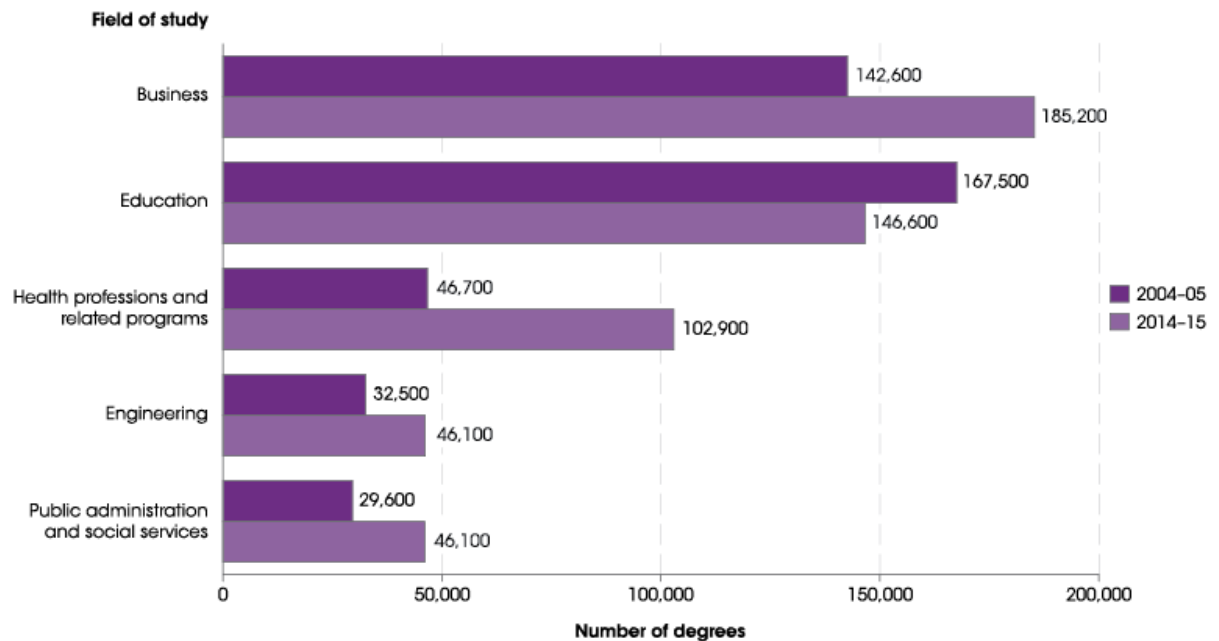
While the vast majority of NM students are enrolled in NM institutions, there is a growing number of out-of-state students enrolling in NM institutions. This data merely outlines the numbers, but not the reasons that these students are going to NM institutions. One thought is that the cost of tuition is a driving factor. NMHU is a leader in affordable tuition and by increasing its distance education offerings, it stands to gain a market share of those students from other states.

PROGRAM/DISCIPLINE RECOMMENDATIONS

Reviewing the 2014-15 data from IPEDs, shows that almost half of the 759,000 master's degrees were conferred in only two disciplines. Business degrees come out on top with 185,000 degrees conferred. While education programs conferred 147,000 degrees in the same period.

To break down those 759,000 master's degrees further during the 2014-15 period, we see that the three largest percentages of degrees were conferred in **Business, Education, and Health Professions and Related** programs; **24 percent at 185,000 degrees, 19 percent at 147,000 degrees, and 14 percent at 103,000 degrees** respectively. The fields in which the next largest percentages of master's degrees were conferred were Engineering at 6 percent with 46,100 degrees and a combination of public administration/social services programs with 6 percent at 46,100. Those top five fields accounted for the largest percentages conferred in 2004–05 and 2013–14.

Chart #4 – Degrees Conferred by Field of Study for 2004-05 and 2014-15.



NOTE: The five fields of study shown are the fields in which the largest number of master's degrees were conferred of the 758,700 master's degrees conferred in 2014–15. Data are for postsecondary institutions participating in Title IV federal financial aid programs. The new Classification of Instructional Programs was initiated in 2009–10. The estimates for 2004–05 have been reclassified when necessary to make them conform to the new taxonomy. "Business" includes business, management, marketing, and related support services, and personal and culinary services.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), Fall 2005 and Fall 2015, Completions component. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2016*, [table 323.10](#).

The official analysis statement from IPEDs researchers below details the next 20 of the professional fields with master's degree conferrals within those same time frames.

Of the 20 fields in which the most master's degrees were conferred in 2014–15, more degrees were conferred in 2014–15 than in 2004–05 for all fields except education. During this period, the largest percentage increase in the number of master's degrees conferred was in the field of homeland security, law enforcement, and firefighting (142 percent, from 4,000 to 9,600 degrees). The next largest percentage increase was in the field of health professions and related programs (120 percent, from 46,700 to 103,000 degrees). Of these 20 fields, the field with the smallest percentage increase since 2004–05 in degrees conferred was English language and literature/letters (5 percent, from 8,500 to 8,900 degrees). The number of degrees conferred in education was lower in 2014–15 (147,000) than in 2004–05 (167,000). More recently, between 2013–14 and 2014–15 the number of business degrees conferred decreased by 2 percent (from 189,000 to 185,000 degrees) and the number of education degrees conferred decreased by 5 percent (from 155,000 to 147,000 degrees). In comparison, the overall number of master's degrees conferred by postsecondary institutions increased by 1 percent.

U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences,
National Center for Education Statistics [IPEDs].

From the IPEDs data shown in **Chart #4** and the following analysis above, it is evident that there are some discipline areas that would serve NMHU well in moving into this new DL initiative. Because Nursing remains a strong offering in online learning programs and because the Program Director for Nursing is a strong proponent of the new DL initiative, Nursing should be one of the early offerings in this modality. There are also changes within the Nursing profession that stand to increase interest in accelerated programs for current Nursing professionals. This bodes well for Nursing program growth in online.

Both Business and Education have a historically strong showing in online programs and as more professionals seek additional credentials to increase their professional value and viability within their professions. Even though as mentioned above, Business has shown a small decline in degrees conferred and Education declined slightly as well, this could be due more to a surging national economy than lack of desire for additional credentialing. Generally, institutions look at adding concentrations to these standard master's program offering. This allows more targeted marketing and also takes advantage of areas within the professions that have been previously underserved with post-secondary education. Choosing a few concentration areas for both disciplines, with an overall graduate core curriculum can differentiate the offerings at NMHU from its competition. With some additional curricular focus, both of those disciplines continue to do well in this type of an accelerated online program.

NMHU COLLECTIVE BARGAINING AGREEMENT [CBA]

AND FACULTY HANDBOOK [FH] REVIEW

With the development of a comprehensive online asynchronous program, there are certain legal considerations of which both the University and faculty should be aware. To gain a perspective on a baseline of University/Faculty agreement, a review of the CBA and Faculty Handbook displays a willingness of the institutional community to consider the success of students in making determinations of how the “business” of educating should take place.

Within this section, a review of specific intellectual property issues and other concerns for Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) in the development of course content for online programs and who may also be full-time faculty at the University will be addressed. Specific sections of each document within this review are relatable to existing policy and procedure, making it relatable to potential future policy and procedure. Lack of clarity on intellectual property can become a challenging issue to address with the development of a quality online course. It is a reality that many who teach online are not fully trained in what constitutes a well designed online learning environment. This is through no fault of their own. We hire faculty most often for expertise in their discipline, not for their knowledge of Quality Matters course design or other industry rubrics.

Most faculty are not trained to design/develop courses that adhere to the Quality Matters rubric, which is a time-tested, research-based approach to course creation. As such, it is recommended that faculty serve as SMEs for content and that instructional designers or other trained personnel create the actual online course, using that SME content. Accessibility of the course content to those with disabilities must be a concern for the University soon and it is well documented that ensuring accessibility also requires a level of knowledge and skill that most instructors will not possess. This aspect of creating a quality online course may be a contentious conversation to have with some faculty. The issue of intellectual property ownership of course content that is addressed in the CBA and Faculty Handbook, can provide some clarity and comfort to the question.

- CBA Section 7.6: Ownership of intellectual property to design course content that has been developed within the scope of the SME’s assigned professional faculty position’s job description shall remain with the instructor. This represents any existing or future course content created within the current F2F and lecture-capture modalities.
- CBA 12.13 & 12.15: As a work for hire project, course content developed for an online course within the proposed online delivery modality shall be considered under joint

ownership by the SME and the University. This agreement allows the SME to maintain rights to the intellectual content, which may be used for other purposes as defined within the CBA and Faculty Handbook; i.e., publication, research, teaching within another modality, while allowing the University the ability to manage online course delivery more efficiently and effectively.

Under the work for hire agreement, certain policies should exist:

1. The SME for any given course should have right of first refusal to teach the online course each time it is offered within any given term. This course would fall under the CBA and Faculty Handbook policies regarding teaching loads.
2. The SME should also have the right of first refusal to be contracted for any future updates to the online course content. Should the SME decline the contract for content updates, the joint ownership of this online course content will free the University to identify optional personnel, who are also SMEs for this content, to provide any necessary updates to the online course content.
3. As mentioned above, the SME has the freedom to publish any research related to the content developed for the online course, to teach that content within a different modality, or deliver it within any outside educational or training activities as permitted by the CBA and Faculty Handbook.
4. Even within the work for hire process, the SME should be assured that academic freedom allows for the development of content for the online course that may contain “differing and sometimes controversial points of view...allowing the [SME] to remain free from reprisal.” (CBA 15.0) (FH IV.A.d & .e).

The University will have specific property rights as well under the written agreement of work for hire content creation by SMEs. Along with the ability to make technological improvements or change production methods (CBA 9.2.8) for development of course content:

1. The University should have the right to assign any number of departmentally approved contingent faculty (FH V.I.6) to teach any number of course sections to meet the needs of enrollment within a given term. (CBA 9.2.10 & 12.5).
2. The University should have the right to store content in a repository, such as a Learning Management System [LMS] of the University’s choosing.
3. The University should have the right to have authorized personnel to fix typos and errors within the generated course content, provided those corrections do not alter the meaning nor perspective of the SME-authored course content.

In order to maintain a level of quality within the online courses, a policy and set of procedures for online faculty evaluation should be developed. This evaluation may be similar to the

evaluation process used for F2F courses; containing aspects of observation, content review, faculty presence in the course, and faculty responsiveness. For this to be successful, specific points of practice or Critical Success Factors (CSFs) should be agreed upon by both the University and the Faculty within each department. (FH III.B.4.g). These CSFs should be contained within any future updates of the CBA and Faculty Handbook to address the points with FTE Faculty and should be stated within any agreement that is developed to contract with contingent faculty to teach the online course.

Some recommended CSFs are included in this report. For the observation aspect of the evaluation, the instructor of the course must be notified in writing, in advance that the evaluator will be in the course shell, within the LMS, on specific dates and duration. (CBA 23.3). The University and Faculty Association, along with the Faculty Senate and the members of the NMHU Technology Committee (FH V.M.4) should develop, refine, and agree to the above recommended policies and procedures (FH III.B.5) in order to deliver the highest quality of an online learning environment to the students of NMHU and support a close intellectual relationship between those students, Faculty, staff at the University. (FH III.A).

STATUS EVALUATION OF NMHU'S READINESS TO

EXPAND ONLINE OFFERINGS

After a series of meetings with various stakeholders at NMHU, a picture of both challenges and opportunities becomes apparent. With an eye towards the OLC Scorecard, it becomes clear that NMHU should address some deficiencies that currently exist in order to meet Critical Success Factors that have shown themselves to be highly effective for successful online programs. Some recommendations, which are contained within the discussion below, will be reiterated in the Recommendations section of this report.

INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT

Addressing the area of Institutional Support, a review of the Success Factors criteria shows that some progress has been made. There is a desire to grow the online presence at Highlands, but many of the actual administrative and academic structures do not yet exist. However, the desire to accomplish the growth is a factor in the eventual success of that work. Below are some key areas upon which Highlands should focus in the area of Institutional Support.

A governance structure specific to online should be put in place. While general academic decisions are fine to be addressed by the departments, faculty senate and the administration, the nature of online teaching requires that it be treated separately from the traditional curriculum. This does not mean there is no involvement from those bodies mentioned above; just that building online requires an additional perspective that may not be present in the traditional on-ground or blended format of delivery. Due to the rapid nature of change within the online environment, rapid and comprehensive decision-making is critical to success of online delivery. Currently, this is developing, primarily due to the desire to make it happen. A defined structure should emerge within the coming months. Within the development of this structure, specific attributes, as discussed elsewhere in this report, should be present.

Online learning is vital to the success of the institution's mission, values and strategic plan. The strategic plan should contain language relating to specifically to online delivery modalities. Current Strategic Goals for 2020. Many of the goals listed speak directly to upgrading technology, which is a crucial component of successful online course delivery. These 2020 goals relating to online learning should be periodically reviewed, improved and updated.

Currently, resources for online growth are scarce, which is precisely why online growth is vital to the continued existence of the University. This becomes a Catch-22 type of issue, in that the

University needs revenue in order to create growth in online delivery; but will not have the revenue until enrollment in online courses brings in that additional revenue. An interim approach might be to access existing resources within the University, adapting them to online use or to utilize other strategic aspects of technological growth within the 2020 Goals. Some personnel from existing University bodies should have representation on this core team:

- Registrar
- Library
- Financial Aid
- Faculty Senate
- Center for Teaching Excellence
- Provost's office
- Technology team
- Department Deans

While those mentioned above may serve as part of an advisory committee that meets regularly to discuss the business of online delivery, the day to day operation would require a level of involvement, autonomy, and responsibility that they might not be able to contribute, given their existing workloads. Managing the needs of the day to day could be addressed through release time for new or existing faculty. It is noted that there are a few faculty positions that are open and ready to be filled in 2018. Strategic hires of those with appropriate credentials in both the academic discipline and online teaching could allow the University to grant release time to new hires who can add their expertise in operational aspects of online to the buildup of online at NMHU. These professionals would possess an extensive online teaching background and would understand the intricacies of online education delivery. As part of the core operations group, they would be tasked with the creation of policies and procedures related to the online initiative, then present those to the faculty and governing bodies for endorsement.

Once policies and procedures have been agreed upon, the day to day operation would need the aforementioned autonomy to ensure the business of delivering an online initiative is not held back by traditional governing procedures. In addition to new hires, there are existing Highlands faculty who possess the background and willingness to build this online initiative. Any faculty or personnel who is enthusiastic and dedicated to the success of the online initiative should be included within the release time approach. These personnel become the managing operational body to support the implementation and the continued adherence of policies and procedures within the online initiative.

Other Highlands faculty will need support, as well, to understand and comply with the new policies and procedures. Training for faculty who wish to teach within this new initiative can come through the Center for Teaching Excellence (CTE), using the extra staffing resource provided by the new hires. There is currently an online faculty training resource, but staff considerations may keep it from being current and facilitated at the level the University needs.

Existing CTE staff should be a part of the core operations group, along with building upon an already strong training portfolio for online teaching and learning. As mentioned elsewhere, training provided through the CTE or any other outlet, must be either identified as mandatory or become incentivized. Time for faculty professional development must be designated as a component of the online initiative.

The core operations group will review technologies and make recommendations for improvements in existing technology. As mentioned elsewhere, the courses developed will need to be evaluated by applying the Quality Matters rubric. Until such time that additional instructional designers are added, this operations core, including the faculty with release time, would serve as the initial course reviewers and contribute to the ongoing evaluation of course delivery and faculty performance in online, providing feedback to the academic departments and personnel within who provide evaluative feedback to faculty. To meet the needs of the pace for online learning, there cannot be a traditional approach to governing and management of the online initiative. The core operations group will need to gain ground, as well as keep up with the rapid changes and development of technologies and approaches, whether theoretical or practical, in online teach and learning.

Day to day operation of this new initiative will be apart from the regular operations of the University. Thus, the core operations group must have not only the time to manage the operations, but the autonomy to do so. As discussed, all faculty governing bodies should endorse a level of autonomy for this operations team, within specifically defined parameters. There are undoubtedly issues that will come up that are not detailed here, but examples of management activities by the core operations team might be; addressing faculty absence from the online course for more than the agreed upon time, and with that, the technology to track instructor and student activity in the course; identification and definition of training needs for those who will teach in the new online initiative, and ongoing delivery of that training, whether through CTE or an asynchronous online course for professional development.

To move the initiative forward, it cannot be an additional layer of responsibility placed on faculty, without an eye toward shifting workloads to meet the online operations needs. These new hires, and existing faculty who support the initiative, should have some of their traditional duties shifted through release time to allow them to focus on the online operations work. Resource allocation better suited to growth of online enrollments could be implemented incrementally, relative to the increase of revenue from online growth.

Other systemic aspects of strategy and governance that are specific to Highlands should be concurrently developed for continued improvement and growth of the online program at the University. All of these could be wrapped into the Strategic Goals/Plan as they are revealed. A separate governance for online would accelerate the solution to issues that are specific to online, rather than included in the governance of on-ground delivery, which has its own specific needs.

During the December conversations, several faculty members expressed concern for intellectual property ownership as the University grows its online presence. Substantial online growth requires an agreement by all University stakeholders to a slightly altered viewpoint of intellectual property. While the faculty member retains ownership of the actual property, the course materials as developed should be created as a work-for-hire body of material. The University should be allowed to utilize the course materials in any manner consistent with solid academic principles without the need of faculty permission to do so. In essence, the faculty member owns the intellectual rights to the base discipline information, but the University owns the course content that was created from that base information. Faculty are compensated for their role in creating the course content, but receive no other remuneration beyond that, with the exception of course updates, which are also treated as work-for-hire. This currently does not exist at Highlands.

The institution is making moves to define the strategic value of online learning by hosting our meetings, along with other ongoing conversations taking place. Much work remains to be done to achieve a buy-in from all the stakeholders at the University. Typically, many stakeholders become supporters of the online initiative after student feedback, increased enrollment and revenue, and demonstrated efficacy in online delivery. Some will never support online teaching and that is not an issue, provided they do nothing to interfere with the progress and growth of online delivery at the institution.

TECHNOLOGY SUPPORT

Within the area of Technology Support are concerns of student authentication; meaning, “is the student who registers for the course the same student who completes the course and receives the academic credit?” A variety of tools, which are localized to the student and likely technology-based must be put in place to help the accrediting bodies support an institutional move to increased online delivery. Those policies, guidelines and technology do not yet exist at Highlands, beyond in-person or video verification. NMHU is not alone in this concern. The accrediting bodies still grapple with how to ensure the student identity in an online course.

A bright spot in the information gathered is that the technology team at NMHU are fully on board with any projected growth in online enrollment. That is not to say that there are not any technology challenges for NMHU; just that the technology team is aware of potential issues with growth and has already made some strategic plans to accommodate that growth in online course delivery. Because NMHU uses D2L as a hosted application, the challenges of keeping a Learning Management System live and available 24/7 is outsourced to the D2L technicians. For not a great deal more financial investment, 24/7 help desk support for the LMS is possible. This would alleviate the need to expand NMHU staff on the technology team, until such time that increased enrollment revenue makes it feasible. A larger challenge lies with the bandwidth of

ISP connections for some of NMHU's distance students. However, this is not an issue for the institution to solve, but rather an issue for the state and local governments.

Still to be completed are additional contingency plans for campus-based systems such as registration, advising, and financial aid. Should there be a prolonged disruption of services, backup systems should be in place. As the institution moves to modernize its systems, the administration of these departments should keep an eye toward alternative approaches to keep processes moving, should there be a service interruption in technology.

Additional concerns that were expressed by the technology team, administrative personnel, and by faculty in our conversations focus on training opportunities to improve personnel skills in the usage of technology tools, both business and academic. Due to staffing shortages and other priorities, there is a vacuum surrounding what these teams need to learn and what other teams need to teach them. Some quality training is currently happening at Highlands, but some of it is limited by poor attendance to the events. Mentioned elsewhere, solutions to this are to create a policy towards mandatory attendance or incentivized attendance to maintain "credentials" at Highlands to teach in this online initiative.

There is some high quality training happening already at the University, through the technology team and through CTE. However, time and again, the need for even more training on business operational systems was mentioned in the meetings by those who may be required to "do more, with the same" level of personnel in the short-term of the online program build up. The hope is always that increased revenue from enrollment growth will provide opportunities for expanding time for staff to provide additional training on the variety of technological systems at NMHU, to support University personnel, students, and faculty.

The technology team should also be charged with investigating and implementing some manner of student authentication beyond standard username and password authentication. Once the investigation is concluded, the team should present to both the Faculty and Administration the results of their investigation. Within this demonstration, the team should make recommendations for the most cost-effective and feasible product or process implementation to provide a level of satisfaction that the proposed student authentication is meeting the needs of the DL program.

STAFFING CONCERNS

The representation of different University bodies in an advisory capacity, as well as some work in operational development, will require that some reprioritizing of personnel energy take place; meaning for now, some additional workload may be unavoidable for select faculty and staff as this initiative grows and revenue is generated. It is difficult to pinpoint which personnel or departments specifically might be involved. However, it is a good bet that administrative,

advising, course development, and policy creation will have to take place ahead of the rollout of the online initiative. Some satisfaction can be derived from the knowledge that all energy devoted to the potential success of this move to asynchronous online delivery supports the University's growth strategy, which benefits everyone at Highlands. Until the additional revenue from enrollments create the potential for more line staff and faculty, those in existing positions will likely have to shift focus briefly to support building the new initiative, expecting that it is for the short term. There may be no way around increasing work load for some personnel, as this growth in enrollment revenue must happen, in order to lighten work load for existing personnel.

COURSE DEVELOPMENT/INSTRUCTIONAL DESIGN

It is in this area where NMHU is lacking and where it should strongly consider any options available to improve course development support. NMHU staff is not lacking in talent, so much as lacking in personnel. While there are instructional designers (ID) on staff to support course development, those IDs are limited to specific academic programs due to grant restrictions. The few courses that were available for evaluation contained various approaches to navigation and design. Formally trained IDs could support the use of a design template for the new courses. For online delivery and to support both the learner, and also the faculty for that matter, the design template should exist for all navigation and learning modules. Every course designed for the new programs should look exactly like the others in navigation and design. If students have to relearn the navigation with each new course as they take it, that can take away from the time students spend achieving the actual learning outcomes within that course. It is for this reason that instructional designers or faculty with extensive instructional design training should become the only personnel to create the actual online course experience. SMEs (faculty or experts in the field) shall provide the content. However, the SME should not create the online experience. As discussed in the CBA/FH portion of this report that addresses intellectual property relating to the course content, only those with instructional design experience should do the hands-on course creation.

In reviewing the current online courses provided, it is noted that the heavy reliance on extended lecture videos made it difficult to identify any instructional approach to delivering on learning outcomes within the online courses. As side note too; less reliance on videos would also lessen the impact of low bandwidth for students who have that concern.

In as much as is feasible, acknowledging the limited resources currently available, NMHU should adopt the following course development and instructional design practices below, as they are outlined by the **Online Learning Consortium**:

- Guidelines regarding minimum requirements for course development, design, and delivery of online instruction (such as course syllabus elements, course materials, assessment strategies, faculty feedback) are followed.*
- Course embedded technology actively supports the achievement of learning outcomes and delivery of course content, and superfluous use of technology is minimized.*
- Instructional materials and course syllabi are reviewed periodically to ensure they meet online course and program learning outcomes.*
- A course development process is followed that ensures courses are designed so that students develop the necessary knowledge and skills to meet measurable learning outcomes at the course and program level.*
- A process is followed that ensures that permissions (Creative Commons, Copyright, Fair Use, Public Domain, etc.) are in place for appropriate use of online course materials.
- Course assignments and activities are reviewed periodically to ensure they meet online course and program learning outcomes.*
- Student-centered instruction is considered during the course development process.
- There is consistency in course development for student retention and quality.
- Course design promotes both faculty and student engagement.
- A process is followed for evaluating the effectiveness of current and emerging technologies to support the achievement of learning outcomes and delivery of course content.
- Usability tests are conducted and applied, and recommendations based upon Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAGs) are incorporated.
- Curriculum development is a core responsibility for faculty (i.e., faculty should be involved in either the development or the decision-making for the online curriculum choices).

(OLC Scorecard, 2014).

**Originally adapted from Institution for Higher Education Policy (2000) Quality on the Line: Benchmarks for Success in Internet-based Distance Education.*

The consistency and quality of the online programs delivered should be the primary driver in creating this expanded online presence. The University may not get a second chance to deliver on the hope of revenue gains should the initial product put online be a lower quality due to resource limitations. Several grant programs exist to support Native American-Serving Nontribal Institutions. While the enrollment of NMHU is not 100% Native American, there may be sufficient need within the population and level of service by the institution to justify support to NMHU from this program. (NASNTI Program, 2018). Other grant opportunities exist that may offer some short term support for NMHU to implement its proposed online expansion.

CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Observational components that have shown to support growth in online programs.

INSTITUTIONAL AND OPERATIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS

- Develop a governance structure charged with creating and defining policies and procedures surrounding online learning. These policies and procedures would include every aspect of institutional involvement in the Distance Learning (DL) initiative and set guidelines for teaching and for registering for a DL course.
- Add specific language to NMHU's strategic goals and mission regarding the new online initiative.
- Articulate to the NMHU population how DL supports the institutional priorities.
- Create a core operational structure for decision-making. This core group is made up of faculty, staff and administration. It has the support and confidence of all academic and administrative bodies at the institution to make necessary decisions without a senate or departmental vote.
- Within the core operational structure, there should be a mechanism to keep the faculty senate informed and up to date on all activities and decisions made on their behalf by the core ops team.
- Measure, evaluate, improve and share as you go.
- Provide success information and data to the entire NMHU population regarding the status of the DL initiative. Maintain this to maintain faculty buy in.
- Develop and dramatically expand a student support structure to provide technology access and contact throughout the entire student life cycle. This includes;
 - Application
 - Admission
 - Advising
 - Library access
 - Registration
 - Financial aid
 - At-risk students support
 - Technical support/training
 - Conflict resolution
 - Preceptor support, if needed
 - Application for graduation
 - ...to name a few.
- Task available instructional designers to manage and update the CTE online faculty training resource for teaching online. The course should be facilitated by someone who is versed in online learning and Quality Matters. If not already, make this course a requirement for

teaching in the newly developed programs. As well, make the course an ongoing endeavour with regular updates.

- As stated in the Faculty Handbook, the University is committed to continuous improvement by providing ongoing professional development for faculty who wish to teach online in the new DL initiative. Make attendance at trainings a condition of continued teaching certification for online instruction within the initiative. Eliminate the current one-off training that is occurring, which wastes staff/faculty time and thus, resources. Perhaps also access any free or low-cost trainings by current vendors; D2L and Banner. The University should do whatever is possible to help faculty and staff become informed technology consumers.
- All course development will be supervised or completed by trained instructional designers with faculty as the Subject Matter Expert (SME). SME will not build the course, but will provide the discipline content.
- Develop an agreed upon course design template for navigation and instructional content placement, based upon the Quality Matters rubric. Each week, section, or module should contain the same identifiable components. Share this template widely among faculty and staff who are interested in the DL initiative.
- Incentivize course development. Make course development a work-for-hire that the SME is paid for and which the institution owns. This is not the same as intellectual property.
- Each course developed must be reviewed by someone familiar with the QM rubric. A minimum score should be identified for a course to either be released to the DL initiative or go back to the course development team of SME and Instructional Designer for additional work.
- Clarify intellectual property and academic freedom with the buy in from faculty and the faculty senate.
- All courses for the new DL initiatives will contain defined learning outcomes as approved by the faculty, academic departments and trained personnel in learning outcome statement development.
- Purchase some Quality Matters training for the first wave. Then have those who attended become peer trainers and course reviewers, using the QM rubric for all accelerated courses developed.
- Circulate the QM Review Rubric to all faculty and staff involved with the new online initiative.
- In line with Critical Success Factors, all video within a course will be limited to six to eight minutes per video topic. Lecture-capture is not permitted in the new initiative.
- Access and contract services as needed to support the new DL initiative; D2L helpdesk, contract instructional designers, etc.
- Any instructor teaching in the new DL initiative is required to fully utilize the LMS grade book within the course.
- Ensure that the new DL initiative fully serves the core programs and the students enrolled.
- Whether as part of the Core Ops or as a separate team within student support, there should be a leadership structure to address student success. This team should develop a strategy that utilizes the strongest areas at NMHU.

ADMISSIONS AND REGISTRATION REQUIREMENTS

- Admit students every term. Currently, the Registrar states there are limits to this, due to the current paper-based approach to a number of business operations. She is working on improving and updating these processes, as well as upgrading the staff's ability to respond more quickly to student and institutional needs.
- Expanded advising will quickly become a critical component of the growing enrollment of the new online initiative. Anticipation of this need, prior to a critical point, will allow the University to plan and schedule for it.
- Web based forms and progress information should be available for the entire student life cycle on a web site; from student interest, to financial aid, to advising, to graduation and eventually, to alumni communication. Communication with University personnel is important, but just-in-time information for adult learners is critical to the success of the online program.
- Minimal to no pre-requisites courses required to gain full admission to the program. Support of the faculty and departments is critical to recruiting the adult learner.
- Admission requirements are aligned with competition. Identify what surrounding institutions require and make NMHU less restrictive, while maintaining the academic rigor of requirements.
- No GRE/GMAT or waive those exams with specific criteria. These exams have not shown themselves to be a good representation for student success in a graduate program.
- Require a new student orientation delivered via an online course. The course can be very short, but is a pre-requisite to enrollment into the DL program. Content includes learning strategies in DL and student equipment functionality/capacity.
- Academic programs will work with the NMHU Marketing personnel to develop and provide lists/publications of industry associations and organizations for marketing purposes. The DL core team will also track and share with NMHU Marketing the stories of success that occur within the new initiative for marketing purposes.

SCHEDULE OF COURSES

- Scalable offering of courses as shown in the carousel developed for NMHU Nursing.
- Schedule facilitates student self-advising, but makes contact with advising personnel or faculty possible and seamless.
- Schedule provides the opportunity for resource planning of specialized and credentialed faculty hiring needs.
- Academic calendar can accommodate an accelerated delivery schedule of courses. The Registrar is again working toward this, but not currently prepared to deliver it. Current limits to personnel knowledge and some paper-based procedures need to be updated.

NMHU Nursing Carousel for 8-week Accelerated Delivery

Calendar Timeframe	Early Sept - Mid Dec		Early Jan - End April		Early Sept - Mid Dec		Early Jan - End April		Mid May - Mid Aug		Early Sept - Mid Dec		Early Jan - End April		Mid May - Mid Aug		Early Sept - Mid Dec							
	Semester Weeks		16		16		0		16		16		0		16		16							
	Term Weeks		8		8		8		8		8		8		8		8							
	Term		FA18A	FA18B	SP19A	SP19B	SU19	FA19A	FA19B	SP20A	SP20B	SU20	FA20A	FA20B	SP21A	SP21B	SU21	FA21A	FA21B	SP22A	SP22B	SU22A	FA22A	FA22B
Admission Group 1		Nurs310	Nurs340	Nurs360	Nurs370	Nurs332	Nurs451																	
		Nurs301A	Nurs301B	Nurs431	Nurs432	Nurs452																		
Admission Group 2				Nurs310	Nurs308B	Nurs332	Nurs360	Nurs370	Nurs451															
				Nurs320A	Nurs431		Nurs340	Nurs432	Nurs452															
Admission Group 3							Nurs310	Nurs431	Nurs360	Nurs370	Nurs332	Nurs451												
							Nurs320A	Nurs320B	Nurs340	Nurs432	Nurs452													
Admission Group 4									Nurs310	Nurs340	Nurs332	Nurs360	Nurs370	Nurs451										
									Nurs320A	Nurs320B		Nurs431	Nurs432	Nurs452										
Admission Group 5												Nurs310	Nurs308B	Nurs360	Nurs370	Nurs332	Nurs451							
												Nurs320A	Nurs431	Nurs340	Nurs432		Nurs452							
Admission Group 6														Nurs310	Nurs431	Nurs332	Nurs360	Nurs370	Nurs451					
														Nurs320A	Nurs320B		Nurs340	Nurs432	Nurs452					
Admission Group 7																Nurs310	Nurs431	Nurs360	Nurs370	Nurs332	Nurs451			
																Nurs320A	Nurs320B	Nurs340	Nurs432		Nurs452			
Admission Group 8																		Nurs310	Nurs431	Nurs332		Nurs360	Nurs370	
																		Nurs320A	Nurs320B			Nurs340	Nurs432	
Admission Group 9																						Nurs310	Nurs431	
																		Nurs320A	Nurs320B				Nurs332	

CURRICULUM MODEL

- Students take two courses back-to-back in a seven- or eight-week term. Course design is based upon learning outcomes, rather than on content amounts and seat time.
- Students can begin in any term offered by the program. Still some limitations within Registrar's office on this.
- Delivery model does not place caps or restrictions on number of students per entry point. The institution may duplicate any number of sections of an individual course, using departmentally approved faculty to teach the course. Each section of the course should be identical to the course master.
- Minimal course sequencing (101 before 102, etc.).
- Minimal to no pre-requisites courses within the program of study (see point above).
- No, or limited, campus residency requirements. Residency requirements should fit the model that would accommodate a working adult; i.e., weekends or during normal business break times.
- Practicum or clinical experiences can be completed in the student's local community. A preceptor or a network of them should be identified within the local community of any enrolled student.
- The delivery of courses provides students the opportunity to complete the program in the least amount of time.
- The course carousel provides a course schedule aligned with the part-time requirement for financial aid.
- All course descriptions and any limited pre-requisites are available and clearly communicated to the student and advising personnel.

EXPANDABLE FACULTY MODEL

- The Program accommodates instructor of record model to scale instructional resources; a master course with identical sections taught by approved faculty.
- The institution identifies faculty to develop first-term courses.
- Any availability of lead instructor/SME for course development begins one term ahead of course delivery.
- The lead instructor oversees instructional design and quality review process, but does not conduct the quality review process.
- Any additional faculty, full or part-time for an individual course, are advertised two terms in advance of course starting to allow for training and departmental approval.
- Specialized and credentialed faculty available to support course development and delivery.
- Facilitation of learning occurs with not more than 15-20 students per section instructor. Additional sections are created should enrollment exceed that number.
- Required faculty training available for online course development, pedagogy/andragogy, and online instruction.
- The institution ensures all applicable Higher Learning Commission's Regional Accrediting Body's accreditation requirements for faculty are met.
- Faculty compensation policies for training, course design, instruction, and mentoring are evaluated and approved by the governing body developed to oversee the DL initiative, based on the Collective Bargaining Agreement, Faculty Handbook and Human Resources.
- The institution considers the impact of remote faculty, potentially in other states, within human resource/academic affairs policies.
- The institution incorporates a faculty orientation for new faculty members each semester.

INSTITUTIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS, ADAPTED FROM ONLINE LEARNING CONSORTIUM

- Guidelines regarding minimum requirements for course development, design, and delivery of online instruction (such as course syllabus elements, course materials, assessment strategies, faculty feedback) are followed.*
- Course embedded technology actively supports the achievement of learning outcomes and delivery of course content, and superfluous use of technology is minimized.*
- Instructional materials and course syllabi are reviewed periodically to ensure they meet online course and program learning outcomes.*
- A course development process is followed that ensures courses are designed so that students develop the necessary knowledge and skills to meet measurable learning outcomes at the course and program level.*

- A process is followed that ensures that permissions (Creative Commons, Copyright, Fair Use, Public Domain, etc.) are in place for appropriate use of online course materials.
- Course assignments and activities are reviewed periodically to ensure they meet online course and program learning outcomes.*
- Student-centered instruction is considered during the course development process.
- There is consistency in course development for student retention and quality.
- Course design promotes both faculty and student engagement.
- A process is followed for evaluating the effectiveness of current and emerging technologies to support the achievement of learning outcomes and delivery of course content.
- Usability tests are conducted and applied, and recommendations based upon Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAGs) are incorporated.
- Curriculum development is a core responsibility for faculty (i.e., faculty should be involved in either the development or the decision-making for the online curriculum choices).

(OLC Scorecard, 2014).

**Originally adapted from Institution for Higher Education Policy (2000)
Quality on the Line: Benchmarks for Success in Internet-based Distance Education.*

TEACHING ONLINE RECOMMENDATIONS, ADAPTED FROM QUALITY MATTERS

- Institutional Context: The instructor is trained and understands the institutional context in which s/he teaches.
- Technologies: The instructor is trained to be knowledgeable about the technologies used in the online classroom.
- Instructional Design: The instructor understands and embraces an instructional design model based on Quality Matters requirements of an online course.
- Pedagogy: The instructor will be trained in adult learning theory (andragogy) understands the pedagogical/andragogical components of the online teaching and learning process.
- Assessment: The instructor should be knowledgeable about various methods of measuring the success of the teaching and learning process in the online classroom, beyond simply testing within the LMS.
- Social Presence: The instructor establishes a social presence and communicates effectively through writing and/or audio/video.

CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS FOR ONLINE TEACHING AND LEARNING

- Provide needed financial support to students. Sometimes the only way forward for a particular set of students is to fill the gap of unmet financial need.
- Focus on academic success. Building a sense of academic self-efficacy is critically important.
- Build community connections. The more seamlessly students find their place in your campus community the greater their chances of success are.

- Actively manage individual student pathways. Top performers take a page out of the consumer research playbook and consider the individual “learning journeys” of their students.
- Identify risk and do something about it. A hard look at institutional data helps top-performers understand which students are at risk.
- Clear the path of roadblocks. Institutions often shoot themselves in the foot with unseen or unresolved barriers to student transitions and pathways.
- Help your most troubled student cohorts. Institutions can make great strides simply by reaching out to the segments of their population who are struggling the most.

(Adapted from Reid, 2017.)

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