

Request for Approval of a Proposed Change



Learning for Life

Request for Approval of a Proposed Change

Change in Educational Offerings:

Degree Programs through Distance Delivery Methods

Submitted to the Higher Learning Commission

by

John A. Logan College

May 17, 2007

Table of Contents



Learning for Life

<i>Introduction.....</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>College Mission, Goals, and Vision.....</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>Proposed Change.....</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>Factors Leading to the Proposed Change.....</i>	<i>9</i>
<i>Approvals for Implementing the Proposed Change.....</i>	<i>12</i>
<i>Impact of the Proposed Change on Challenges Identified by the Commission as Part of or Subsequent to the Last Comprehensive Visit.....</i>	<i>13</i>
<i>Plan to Implement and Sustain the Proposed Change.....</i>	<i>19</i>
<i>Strategies to Evaluate the Proposed Change.....</i>	<i>26</i>
<i>Conclusion.....</i>	<i>28</i>

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: *Spring 2007 Online Class Enrollment*

APPENDIX B: *Online Students Survey Results – Spring 2006*

APPENDIX C: *Online Students Survey Results – Fall 2006*

APPENDIX D: *Associate in Arts Degree Online Curriculum Guide*

APPENDIX E: *Computer Networking Online Certificate Program Curriculum Guide*

APPENDIX F: *John A. Logan College Technology Plan*

APPENDIX G: *Procedure for Curriculum Development, Administrative Procedure 302*

APPENDIX H: *John A. Logan College Course and Curriculum Submission Handbook*

APPENDIX I: *John A. Logan College Assessment Rubric for Online Instruction*

Table of Contents



Learning for Life

APPENDIX J: *John A. Logan College Guidelines for Online Course Development*

APPENDIX K: *'Logan at 50' Proposal*

APPENDIX L: *Strategic Planning Guide*

APPENDIX M: *Information for Advisors on Distance Learning Classes*

APPENDIX N: *Retention Rate Comparison for FL06 and Student Success Rate Comparison for FL06*

APPENDIX O: *John A. Logan College 2006 Report on Web Accessibility*



Introduction

The first online offerings at John A. Logan College were presented as continuing education courses in 1998. Since then, online courses have grown to represent a significant number of transfer and career classes, designed to serve students regardless of physical proximity to the campus. In the spring of 2007, online credit enrollment is 941, for 47 class sections (APPENDIX A: *Online Student Enrollments – Spring 2007*).

John A. Logan College is a two-year public community College located in rural southern Illinois. It was established by a public mandate in 1967 and opened its doors for classes the following year.

The College is named for John A. Logan (1826-86), a Civil War general who spent his early years in what is now the community college district before becoming a U.S. senator and vice-presidential candidate (with James G. Blaine) in 1884. Logan is also remembered for his role in establishing Memorial Day and as an advocate of public education. "...To education must we look," is the College motto, from a speech delivered by Senator Logan in 1882.

The College serves five rural counties with a district population of 143,000. It is located 335 miles south of Chicago, and 180 miles from the state capital, Springfield. The closest large population center is St. Louis, Missouri, approximately 130 miles to the northwest.

The College enrolls 6,202 students in baccalaureate-transfer and career education courses (Spring 2007), more than 13,000 students in credit and non-credit continuing

Introduction



Learning for Life

education, and more than 15,000 through the Center for Business and Industry. Full-Time Equivalency (FTE) is 3,804 (Spring 2007).

College Mission, Goals, and Vision



Learning for Life

College Mission

We are a diverse learning and teaching community committed to improving individual life and society through high-quality, accessible educational programs and engaged learning opportunities.

Mission Goals

- To foster an environment where diverse individuals, groups, and views are valued.
- To provide programs and services for lifelong learning that create and enhance opportunities for achieving career and personal goals in a changing society.
- To serve with integrity and accountability as a model of institutional excellence.
- To offer affordable programs and services enhanced by technology in an accessible and safe learning and working environment.
- To be a center for intellectual, economic, cultural, and recreational resources for individuals and communities.

College Vision

Learning for Life

General Education Goals



Learning for Life

General Education Goals

The faculty and staff of John A. Logan College are committed to providing students with opportunities to develop learning abilities that will last a lifetime. Graduates will be prepared to succeed in their personal and professional lives because of achieved competence in the following general education goals:

- Goal 1: To think critically when solving problems, making decisions, and applying scientific inquiry methods.
- Goal 2: To participate in the entire communication process of listening, speaking, reading, and writing.
- Goal 3: To develop mathematical reasoning and an ability to apply quantitative methods.
- Goal 4: To achieve physical and mental wellness by learning responsibility, interpersonal skills, and a sense of personal worth.
- Goal 5: To develop an ethical awareness that focuses on the values of integrity, honesty, and personal responsibility.
- Goal 6: To become a responsible member of local, national, and global communities by recognizing the values of diverse histories, economies, and cultures.
- Goal 7: To respond esthetically to life by engaging in creative and artistic experiences.
- Goal 8: To accomplish workplace readiness by acquiring competencies and technological application skills related to chosen careers.



John A. Logan College

Request for Approval of a Proposed Change

Change in Educational Offerings:

Degree Programs through Distance Delivery

Proposed Change

John A. Logan College requests approval from the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools to extend accreditation to degree programs offered through distance delivery methods in areas relevant to its mission as a public community college. The request includes approval for an existing Associate of Arts (AA) degree to be offered online, as well as for other degrees to be offered through distance delivery methods in the future. Approval is requested in accordance with HLC Policy I.C.2.b (Change in Educational Offering).

As a result of offering online degree programs, the College will enhance its mission by extending accessibility to students. Among the declared goals within the mission statement is “to offer affordable programs and services enhanced by technology in an accessible and safe learning and working environment.” The College’s Mission will not change as a product of extending accreditation to a degree earned via distance delivery. In fact, an online degree program is a natural extension of the Mission, which acknowledges



that the College must “provide programs and services for lifelong learning that create and enhance opportunities for achieving career and personal goals in a changing society.”

The College recognizes that changes in society have created expectations that an institution that serves the public must be flexible enough to rapidly accommodate technological change when it is in the best interests of its constituencies. An online degree program will offer students the same opportunities that are currently available only by coming onto the College campus. A degree program offered through distance delivery will also further extend accessibility to students and potential students bound by restrictions of time, geographic location, job or family responsibilities, and also to students with various disabilities.

Other accredited educational institutions in southern Illinois, the region, the state, and nationwide are currently offering, or are in the process of creating, degree programs for distance delivery. In order to fulfill its mission of accessibility to higher education, it is imperative that John A. Logan College offer the same or better options for its students as they might find elsewhere. While many students might otherwise be best served by this College, the convenience of distance delivery by another institution might prove too attractive a lure if this College does not face the challenge of a degree at a distance.

Flexibility and convenience to students are additional considerations for the College’s creation of an online degree program. An online degree will enhance accessibility to higher education. This initiative will serve a diverse body of students, including those with disabilities, family commitments, work commitments, and those without adequate transportation.



In-district students are distributed within a rural five county region, covering an area of 1,140 square miles. Additionally, almost 40 percent of enrolled students are over the age of 25; and of those reporting an employment code on their application, 18 percent reported being employed full-time. Sixty-two percent reported being employed either full- or part-time.

In a spring 2006 survey of online students at John A. Logan College (APPENDIX B: *Online Student Survey Results – Spring 2006*), more than 62 percent cited convenience as the reason for taking a distance education offering. One student responded: “I loved taking this online course. I’m a paraplegic confined to a wheelchair; and it is so much easier than making the trip to campus everyday. I will be taking online courses in the future and I wish that more classes were offered online.”

The first online degree offered by the College will be an Associate in Arts (AA) (APPENDIX D: *Associate in Arts Degree Online Curriculum Guide*). A Computer Networking Online Certificate Program (APPENDIX E: *Computer Networking Online Certificate Program Curriculum Guide*) will also be available to students. Another online degree that will be offered in the future is the Associate in Science (AS). Courses in online degree and certificate programs will not constitute new courses or changes to the curriculum. Only the mode of delivery will be changed. (Complete course information is available in the College Catalog at <http://www.jalc.edu/catalog/>.)

Other degrees to be offered electronically have not yet been determined and will depend on student needs in the future. However, the College believes that its mission is best



served by extending accessibility of programs, certificates, and degrees to as many students as may benefit from technology-enhanced delivery.

The degrees currently offered by the College are separate associate degree programs in arts, science, engineering science, general studies, applied science, and arts in teaching. A number of certificates are also offered. Students may complete degree requirements by completing the general course requirements for these programs. Curriculum guides provide guidance for students to allow students to complete requirements by following the curriculum guides. Many of the associate degree guides have been carefully articulated with other Illinois institutions of higher education, as well as those from surrounding states, and will allow students to transfer to these schools upon the completion of their studies at John A. Logan College.

The College mission calls for responsiveness and adaptation in the face of societal and technological change. Online delivery of educational material has in recent years become an accepted and effective means of delivery. It is a mode of delivery that creates flexibility, convenience, and freedom for the learner. A five-year trend analysis of enrollment in online courses shows that accessibility to educationally-sound degree offerings via distance delivery technology can only be expected to increase. The College addresses this challenge by extending its reach to students through online delivery.

In no way will the proposed change of extending accreditation to degree programs offered through distance delivery alter the mission or goals of the College. Rather, it will serve as evidence that the College takes seriously its mission of accessibility and engaged learning opportunities.



Factors Leading To The Proposed Change

John A. Logan College has participated in distance delivery of education for more than thirty years, beginning with telecourses (video-based classes), then interactive television (compressed video). The first courses were offered online in 1998. The administration of distance education has always been centered within the Instructional Division and supported by the Learning Resources Center (LRC), which provides instructional design and technical support. Telecourses (videotaped lessons) and live transmission via interactive compressed video to distant sites have been primary methods used to disseminate instruction. The use of the Internet for distance delivery was first evaluated and introduced in the mid- to late-1990s. Online discussion boards were first used to supplement in-class materials, followed by the trial of completely online classes through the continuing education department. By 2000, online credit courses were proving successful. Enrollment has grown continuously in online classes since the inception. The Internet is also used extensively to supplement on-campus classes, in addition to the classes offered entirely online.

Planning within the LRC and the Instructional Division has enabled online delivery to flourish. Extensive professional development activities have ensured a competent and well-prepared faculty (Teaching & Learning training schedule and training descriptions are at: http://www.jalc.edu/tlc_trainingsched.html). Adoption of Blackboard in 2000, as a course delivery system, hosted at Blackboard's corporate headquarters in Washington, DC, with 24-hour technical support, ensures a robust, reliable, accessible, and easy-to-use interface for both faculty and students.

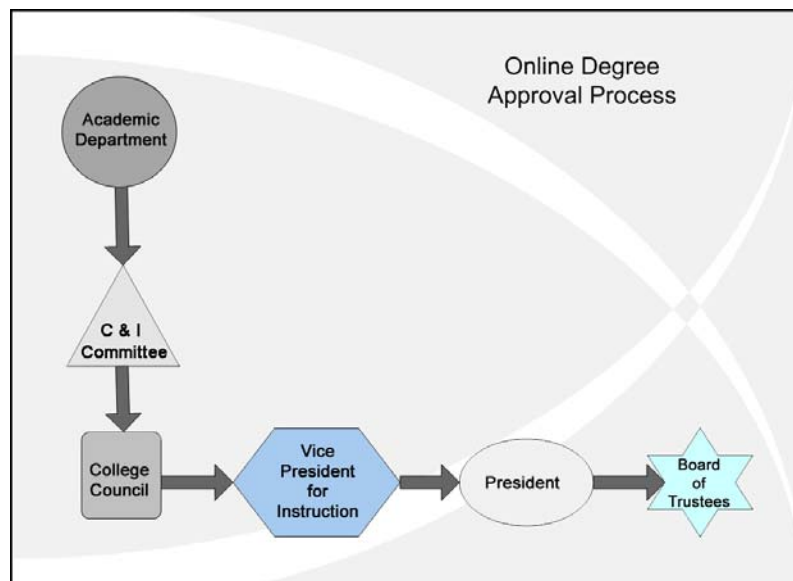
Factors Leading to the Proposed Change



Learning for Life

A Technology Implementation Committee (TIC) reviews the use of technology on campus and in instruction and works with Information Systems (the information technology office) to develop a technology plan (APPENDIX F: *John A. Logan College Technology Plan 2006*) for the maintenance and expansion of technology to support all College operations.

Preparation for an online degree takes place within the instructional division, with faculty participation in course development and planning within individual academic departments. Review and approval of all transfer and career offerings, including courses offered via distance delivery, begins in academic departments and progresses through the Curriculum and Instruction Committee (C&I), the College Council, the Vice President for Instruction, the President, and the Board of Trustees. This process ensures that local and state criteria and requirements are met and that courses are articulated with state and regional institutions.





Surveys of online students indicate high satisfaction with current online courses and the desire for online degrees. In a Spring 2006 survey of online students at John A. Logan College (APPENDIX B: *Online Students Survey Results - Spring 2006*), 234 respondents were asked: “Would you like to be able to receive an entire College degree through online classes?” Fifty-six percent responded “yes” and 15 percent responded “possibly.” Ninety-two percent responded that they would possibly take future online classes, and 87 percent said they would recommend an online course to a friend. Less than 4 percent said they would not recommend an online class to a friend. Additionally, almost 90 percent stated that the technology used in the online class enhanced the learning experience.

The survey also found a high percentage of technology ownership and usage by those taking online classes. Ninety-one percent reported ownership of personal computers, while 72 percent reported having a broadband or high speed Internet connection (DSL, cable, or satellite). When the survey was repeated, with a smaller sampling in the Fall of 2006, 79 percent reported ownership of a personal computer and 82 percent reported having access to a broadband connection. (APPENDIX C: *Online Students Survey Results – Fall 2006*).

Several indications suggest that this is the appropriate time to offer an online degree:

- Successful course development training
- Technical training and support
- Assessment of student learning for program improvement
- Direct involvement of academic departments and faculty in course development



Approvals For Implementing The Proposed Change

John A. Logan College has a rigorous program development sequence, involving oversight and approvals as prescribed in *College Administrative Procedures, Procedure for Curriculum Development, Administrative Procedure 302* (APPENDIX G) and the *Course and Curriculum Submission Handbook 2005* (APPENDIX H).

The College is not currently planning the creation of new courses or degree programs for the purpose of offering an online degree. The proposed change merely involves extending accreditation to already existing degree programs offered through distance delivery. However, existing courses and degree programs that will be offered via distance delivery have met necessary approvals from required divisions at the College, through the Board of Trustees, and ultimately through the Illinois Community College Board (ICCB) and the Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE). Should new courses or programs be developed for any form of delivery, they would be subject to the same scrutiny and approval processes and are subject to program accreditation criteria.



Impact of the Proposed Change on Challenges Identified by the Commission as Part of or Subsequent to the Last Comprehensive Visit

John A. Logan College received a comprehensive visit from the Higher Learning Commission team in February of 2007 and was approved for a ten-year reaccreditation by the visiting team.

The recommendation included both strengths and challenges.

In stating the College's current strengths, the team, led by Dr. David Ho, said, "Students were effusive in their praise of faculty in their classrooms and laboratory experiences. They were also very complimentary of student support services from recruitment and advising to placement to campus safety. Included in the services they received was outstanding technical support for online and blended courses." He also noted, "Faculty expressed appreciation for the levels of technology support. Training provided in the use of these technologies such as Blackboard and smart classrooms is widespread."

In reporting opportunities for improvement, assessment and strategic planning were identified. The team noted that the College is participating in the Higher Learning Commission's Assessment Academy, and stated that assessment continues to "deserve institutional attention." It noted that while much has been done in institutional strategic planning, "much remains to be done so that the strategic goals flow from the College's mission, and support a coherent vision of 'Logan at 50.'"



The previous comprehensive visit in March of 1997 resulted in a report which noted that the College was effectively accomplishing its mission and objectives by building on a record of stability and success while responding to new initiatives and opportunities.

In the 1997 report, the team noted the need for a cohesive and comprehensive assessment plan for student academic achievement. The team reported few patterns of evidence to support vigorous student assessment or assessment planning. Another area noted in the document was the strategic planning process employed at the College. The team noted that parts of the planning process appeared fragmented, and that a lack of communication was evident.

An assessment coordinator has headed the College Assessment Initiative since its inception in 1996 (<http://www.jalc.edu/assessment_initiative/index.html>). The Assessment Initiative is well underway and includes extensive input from faculty and staff within the Instructional division. It offers a systematic and verifiable methodology for integrating assessment into College instruction. The Assessment Initiative at John A. Logan College is about program improvement and is a cyclic, systematic process based on the College's mission statement and general education goals written by the internal and external stakeholders (see Fig. 1, Assessment Cycle). Since its inception in 1996, the general education goals have been routinely reviewed and updated by stakeholders, academic departments have written goal statements that reflect the general education goals, course syllabi have become more standardized, and new course objectives must be written in measurable form and relate to at least one of the goals.

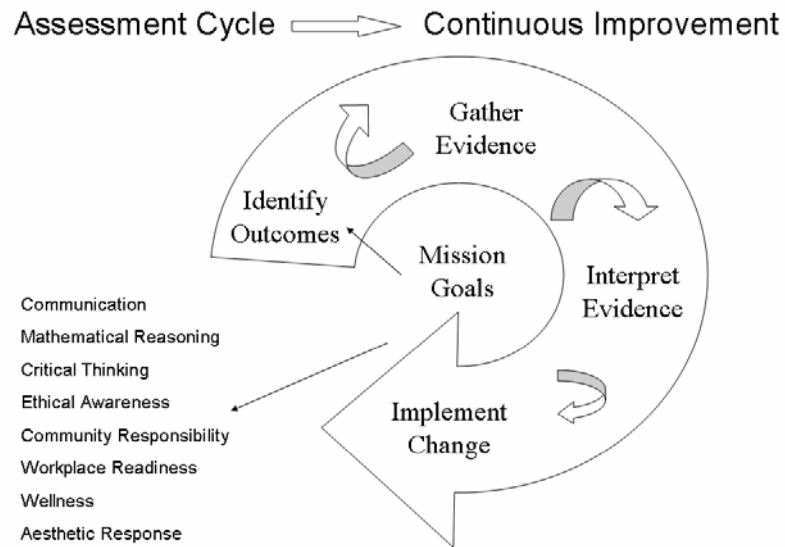


Fig. 1, Assessment Cycle

As the College completes a second five-year assessment cycle, assessment of student learning is becoming an integral part of the John A. Logan College culture. Through the nominal group process, each of the general education goals is reviewed by members of all major sectors on campus and the community. The Assessment Initiative is managed by coordinators who are from the faculty ranks and has been with the project since its beginning. The coordinators are assisted by the AAIC, Academic Achievement Implementation Committee, which is comprised of representatives from all areas of the College, and uses input from an Advisory Committee. The process of implementing the general education goals is based on four phases, beginning with the review by the nominal group, followed by inventory and judgment within the academic departments, and finally structured feedback

based on evidence of learning in core courses (see Fig. 2, Assessment Implementation Process).

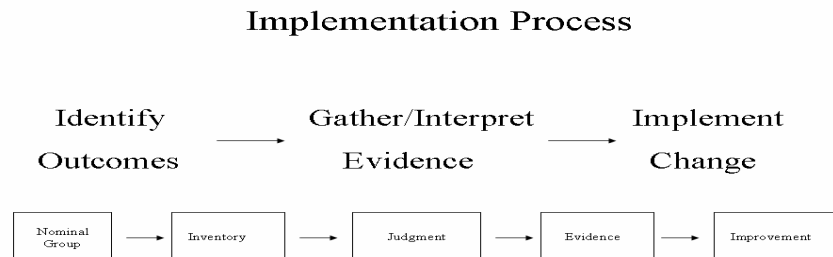


Fig. 2, Assessment Implementation Process

John A. Logan College has recently been accepted into the first cohort class of the Higher Learning Commission’s Academy for the Assessment of Student Learning. An Academy team has been formed with representatives from major sectors of the College, including faculty, administration, student services, and workforce development and community education. The proposed intent of this four-year commitment is to design a structured feedback loop that will use the results of student learning for program improvement. While John A. Logan College takes pride in its ten-year history of assessment, it is postured for the next level—that of moving to a culture centered on the assessment of student learning.

The online committee has established a rubric for assessment of online courses. The assessment rubric (APPENDIX I: *John A. Logan College Assessment Rubric for Online Instruction*) will ensure that assessment methods are appropriate to stated course outcomes



and the technology used for online delivery. A set of best practices in the form of guidelines for online course development are also used in preparing faculty for online instruction (APPENDIX J: *John A. Logan College Guidelines for Online Course Development*). The guidelines and assessment rubric were designed together to directly tie course development with the elements that will be assessed.

Planning has been important to the success of online learning. It continues to be a challenge for the College. While an annual operational plan has been in place for many years, the College is in the midst of creating its first comprehensive strategic plan. The planning process includes input from a myriad of internal and external constituencies of the College community. As the College approaches its 40th anniversary, it has recognized the need for strategic planning, has developed a strategic planning process, and plans to implement *Logan at 50: A Strategic Plan for 2017 and Beyond* (*Logan at 50 Proposal and Strategic Planning Guide*: APPENDIX K and APPENDIX L).

In addition to the challenges noted in the recent HLC report, many challenges relating to technology have arisen since the last site visit. The College has responded to those challenges, planned accordingly, and provided the staff and fiscal resources necessary to succeed with online delivery. The Library <<http://www.jalc.edu/lrc.html>> has expanded access of bibliographic services, an online library catalog, databases, and online materials for students in online classes. The LRC has created an extensive orientation for online learners. Software and hosting services are provided by Blackboard, one of the leaders in educational courseware services.

Impact of the Proposed Change



Learning for Life

In short, the College has planning processes, training and support services, experienced staff, and infrastructure in place to ensure that online delivery of a degree program will succeed.



Plan to Implement and Sustain the Proposed Change

John A. Logan College has committed to offering the necessary infrastructure and support to provide online learning. Extending accreditation to degrees offered at a distance is a logical progression of groundwork already laid to provide education and support at a distance. The growth and success of online classes is attributable to several factors, including:

- administrative support
- faculty training and technical support
- services and support for students
- technology access and infrastructure

The College has exhibited strong administrative support for online learning. An understanding of online learning is exemplified by the Vice President for Instructional Services, Dr. Julia Schroeder, who teaches a physics course online and works with faculty from the perspective of an experienced online instructor.

Since the inception of distance education at the College, the LRC has been the primary administrative office to support distance learning, including telecourses (videotaped classes), interactive television, and online classes. For many years, telecourses were the primary focus of distance instruction, and they continue to provide a significant, although declining, student enrollment. Interactive (compressed video) television classes, on the other hand, were tried as a synchronous mode of instruction, but failed to capture the needs or interests of students and are no longer offered. In 1998, online instruction



was introduced and quickly surpassed both other modalities. Online instruction has been extremely successful in meeting student needs and providing access from off-campus locations.

Faculty professional development, emphasizing both technology and pedagogy, is one of the factors that has allowed online instruction to gain and maintain momentum in providing new opportunities to students. Technology and software training have been offered to faculty in one-on-one, small group, and large group sessions. More than 1,000 person hours of training was delivered between August 2006 and February 2007. One-on-one consultation is also readily available, relative to any area of distance learning.

In 2005, the College received a five-year U.S. Department of Education Title III development grant to improve the faculty and staff development program, and help the College transition to a learning-centered model. In support of the grant, the College built a Teaching & Learning Center (TLC) within the LRC for the express purpose of providing professional development in areas such as online delivery, instructional design, learning inventory assessment, evaluation methodology, multimedia development, and computer applications. Activities are centered on continuous improvement through support of institution-wide faculty and staff development initiatives. Professional development not only provides technological competencies for faculty, but also the understanding of how to apply learning principles and instructional strategies or methods in pedagogy to online classes so that instruction is both effective and meaningful. A full-time professional development facilitator supports faculty and staff with training in technology and best practices. The TLC serves as a major resource for faculty who will deliver instruction for degrees delivered via distance technology. The College commits to the institutionalization of Title III staff and professional



development programs beyond the five-year grant period through strategic and operational planning.

The College is a member and active partner in the Illinois Online Network (ION), a faculty development collaboration between all forty-eight community colleges in Illinois and the University of Illinois. The goals of the program are to help faculty to develop and deliver courses in a completely online format, and also to produce online courses that incorporate best practices for engaging students in discussion and critical thinking.

Each year since 1999, the College has sent a contingent of faculty and administrators to the Illinois Online Network's Faculty Summer Institute (FSI) <http://www.ion.uillinois.edu/>; a multi-day conference centered on best practices in online instruction. The FSI website states, "The conference addresses the needs of administrators, educators, trainers, and designers who are involved in the application of Web-based technologies to the teaching and learning process and in the planning, administration, and management of online education programs." The College sent seven faculty and staff members to the conference in 2006, and another seven the previous year. The College's Associate Dean for Media Services & Telecommunications (LRC) has been on the ION steering committee since 1999.

The College recognizes that services and support for students at a distance must be readily available. These services are provided by various departments of the College, including the Learning Resources Center, Student Services, and Information Technology. Services are provided at a level sufficient to support learners at a distance, and include access to online information and services such as student records, academic advisement,



registration, financial aid, the College Catalog, degree information, and course schedules. Access and information are also available through more traditional media such as printed material, telephone, mail, fax, and personal meetings.

Advisors have received training to address student learning styles and working with students to determine the most appropriate course placement. A check list for advisors to use in order to make sure that students are prepared for distance delivery courses was developed by the LRC and put in use by Student Services in 2003 (APPENDIX M: *Information for Advisors on Distance Learning Classes*).

The LRC has created an extensive online orientation <http://www.jalc.edu/virtual_campus/ori/index.html> for students wishing to take online classes. An online orientation for dual credit students (high school students enrolled in a college credit class, who receive both college credit and high school credit for that class) was added in the Spring of 2007 <http://www.jalc.edu/dual_credit/>. The Student Services department, with the LRC's help, has created additional online orientations <http://www.jalc.edu/admissions/orientation_program/account_and_enroll.html> including a new student orientation, an orientation to financial services, and an orientation to student records. All of these help students with necessary knowledge and preparedness. After implementation of the online orientation for online students in the Fall of 2003, both student success and retention rates jumped for online students. Student success rates increased from 50 percent to 62 percent, an increase of 12 percent over the previous year. Retention jumped



from 64 percent to 75 percent, an increase of 11 percent. By the fall of 2006, retention for online classes was at 83 percent, with a success rate of 65 percent. The comparable on-campus sections of the same courses showed a retention average of 89 percent and a success average of 65 percent (APPENDIX N: *Retention Rate Comparison for FL06 and Student Success Rate Comparison for FL06*).

The LRC also provides a testing and proctoring center within its Learning Lab. The facility provides secure testing, including computer-based testing, for both on-campus and off-campus classes. It also serves as a proctoring facility for other educational institutions whose students need a secure testing facility with local proximity to the College. When the College's distance or online students need proctoring outside the area, the LRC arranges for secure testing facilities at the distance location. The LRC also provides both telephone and email support of students with technical issues related to online learning.

Library Services <<http://www.jalc.edu/lrc.html>>, also part of the LRC, have been expanded to meet the needs of students needing library resources when away from the campus. Distance learners have benefited from an online library catalog, with access to the resources of 81 libraries through the Southern Illinois Library Network (SILNET). An extensive selection of online bibliographic databases is available to distance learning students <<http://www.jalc.edu/lrclibrary/databases.html>>. A librarian is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, for chat reference through the AskAway service <http://www.jalc.edu/lrclibrary/askawaychat_jal.html>.

The College provides the Blackboard Learning System <www.blackboard.com> as a delivery platform for course content. Blackboard is a recognized leader in e-learning



software, and provides tools for creation of course content, synchronous and asynchronous faculty/student communication, assessment, collaboration, and group learning. The software, available through a web browser, is hosted at Blackboard's corporate headquarters in Washington, D.C., which provides 24-hour technical support and highly reliable service.

Blackboard's service is ADA compliant, meeting accessibility guidelines in Section 508 of the Federal Rehabilitation Act. The College offers training to faculty to help them produce accessible online material (Appendix O: *John A. Logan College 2006 Report on Web Accessibility*).

All faculty offices are equipped with a computer connected to the Internet. Four open computer labs are available on campus for students needing access to the Internet or computer applications required for coursework. Additionally, most of the campus is covered by an open access *IEEE 802.11b/g* wireless network, allowing connections from classrooms, lounge areas, the cafeteria, etc. Connectivity to the campus consists of a fractional DS3 line, currently with a total bandwidth of 12 mbps. Additional bandwidth can be added as need arises. However, because Blackboard is hosted off-site, distance learning students accessing Blackboard from off-campus are not using campus bandwidth.

Over the past two to three years, broadband connectivity has become much more widely available throughout the College district. Private providers such as Verizon, cable television companies, and Internet companies are making broadband connectivity available to consumers at competitive prices. Additionally, wireless hotspots are appearing throughout the area. The city of Carbondale has committed to free wireless broadband in the downtown

Plan to Implement and Sustain the Proposed Change



Learning for Life

area. Local restaurants and businesses are also beginning to offer wireless connectivity.

The College is also working with the Connect SI <<http://www.connectsi.us>> Initiative to bring economic and community development to the southernmost 20 counties of Illinois by improving bandwidth and telecommunications infrastructure.



Strategies to Evaluate the Proposed Change

Several strategies will be used to document and evaluate outcomes related to the proposed change, including quality assessment, student success and retention, student satisfaction, and enrollment growth.

The office of Research and Development on campus tracks and keeps statistical data related to classes, programs, and institutional performance. Individual departments are responsible for ensuring course content and quality. Student surveys are employed each semester to provide statistical information, as well as comments and statements by individual students.

Any degree offered through electronic means will be part of the daily operations of the College. Faculty are the same faculty who teach equivalent courses in the classroom setting and understand the differences and similarities between campus-based and electronically offered programs; therefore, evaluation of online courses is conducted by the same academically qualified personnel who work with campus-based programs.

The College embraces the *Best Practices for Electronically Offered Degree and Certificate Programs*. There is an understanding that while fundamental differences between online and campus-based programs must be understood and addressed, the same standards of responsiveness and quality must be maintained under all modalities. It is important that the institution maintain the ability to adapt, to work with unexpected outcomes, and maintain the flexibility to adjust actions and methods to meet changing needs. The *Best Practices* document states “that education is best experienced within a community of learning where competent professionals are actively and cooperatively involved with creating, providing,



and improving the instructional program.” The College believes that its students are best served by an institution where online courses and online degree programs are easily accessible and enable them to experience learning in the ways they learn best.

John A. Logan College is in the process of transitioning to a learning college model. The sixth key principle on which a learning college is based in Terry O’Banion’s, *A Learning College for the 21st Century* is, “The learning college and its learning facilitators succeed only when improved and expanded learning can be documented for its learners.” The College understands that not only must learning take place, that it must be documented and that new data must continually be used for program improvement.

Conclusion



Learning for Life

Conclusion

Extending accreditation to programs offered online will serve the students of John A. Logan College by creating access to learning-centered educational opportunities not currently available to them. As the College includes degrees by distance delivery, lifelong learning opportunities will be enhanced and accessibility, accountability, and affordability will apply to a new set of opportunities for all students utilizing the diverse resources available to them.