

Office of Internal Audit



Program Review

DISTANCE EDUCATION

April 2000

**UW System Internal Audit
Distance Education
Program Review**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

BACKGROUND	1
History of Distance Education at UW	1
System-Wide Distance Education Development Efforts	2
SCOPE	3
DISCUSSION	3
Extent of Use of Distance Education Technologies	4
Number of Distance Education Courses	4
Faculty Development and Support	5
Student Support Services	7
Distance Education Planning	8
Goals	8
Coordination	9
Course Offerings and Technical Support	10
Distance Education Activities Reporting	10
Extent of Collaboration Between UW System Institutions	11
Collaborative Courses and Programs	11
Challenges to Collaboration	13
Collaboration Success Factors	15
Adequacy and Congruence of Various Distance Education-Related Policies	16
Distance Education Fee	17
Copyright	17
CONCLUSION	18
APPENDIX	

BACKGROUND

Section 24.60(1g), Wis. Stats., defines distance education as “instruction that takes place, regardless of the location of a teacher or student, by means of telecommunications or other means of communication, including cable, instructional television fixed service, microwave, radio, satellite, computer, telephone or television.” The hallmark of various University of Wisconsin (UW) System institutions’ definitions of distance education is the separation of teacher and learner in space and/or time, which is consistent with the statutory definition. In the UW System, distance education is but one component of a system-wide initiative to integrate learning technologies into the curriculum.

History of Distance Education at UW

The UW has a long tradition of providing distance education. In 1892, the UW at Madison began offering correspondence (print-based) courses. Printed-based course programming continued to be a critical distance education component at some UW System institutions. UW-Madison was also a pioneer when it began broadcasting courses using radio in 1917. In 1966, UW-Madison began using the Educational Teleconference Network (ETN) to deliver programs. In the early 1970’s, UW System Administration created the Extended Degree Program at four UW System institutions – Green Bay, Platteville, River Falls, and Superior. The Extended Degree Program has contributed to the enhancement of distance education at these institutions. In 1996, a number of fiber optic system networks were established, linking UW System institutions, technical colleges, and various high schools. In 1997, the UW Board of Regents approved a proposal to establish Learning Innovations (LI) to design and to assist UW faculty in designing on-line courses, and to distribute these courses. Also, in 1997, the Learning Technology Development Council (LTDC) was formed as a vehicle for UW System institutions to share expertise in integrating technologies into instruction. In late 1997 and early 1998, the backbone needed to connect UW System institutions to BadgerNet was installed. (BadgerNet is the State of Wisconsin’s next generation of voice, video, and data networks and communication services.) In 1998, the Pyle Center opened its doors. The Pyle Center provides state-of-the-art distance education classrooms and rooms for faculty technology development.

The UW System has a long tradition of providing distance education.

System-wide Distance Education Development Efforts

UWSA initiated numerous efforts to promote the use of distance education technologies.

In order to promote the curricular integration of learning technologies, including the use of distance education technologies, and to provide guidance to UW System institutions, UW System Administration (UWSA) initiated some planning and development efforts. The most noticeable efforts were the Access to Quality Steering Committee, The Study of the University of Wisconsin System in the 21st Century, and the Distance Education Standards Task Force. Some major products of these efforts include:

- **The Principles for Pricing Distance Education Credit Courses, Degree and Certificate Programs.** These principles are intended to provide UW System institutions with “the foundation for a new tuition model for distance education courses and programs.” The principles were approved by the Board of Regents (BOR) in June 1999.
- **The Pilot Distance Education Funding Policies for Credit Instruction.** UWSA issued the policies in July 1995. The policies provide general guidance to institutions related to funding, assignment of credit hours, tuition, distance education fees, and segregated fees. The pilot policies were renewed on a “rolling horizon basis” for an additional two years in July 1997 and then in June 1999.
- **Strategic Information Technology (IT) Plan.** UWSA developed the first system-wide IT plan in 1995. The 1995 plan and the plans developed in subsequent years form the foundation for the establishment of an infrastructure and for faculty development for technology-based education, including distance education.
- **BadgerNet Infrastructure.** UWSA requested and received funding in the 1997-99 biennial budget for information technology infrastructure required for all UW four-year institutions and two-year colleges to be connected to BadgerNet.
- **Faculty Technology.** UWSA requested and received funding in the 1997-99 biennial budget to “provide faculty and instructional academic staff with instructional technology and for instructional design and technical support to enable them to redesign and incorporate instructional technology into on-campus classroom and distance education courses.”

The Study of the UW System in the 21st Century also laid out a number of principles to guide UW System institutions on distance education. The study affirms faculty as the “key to successful utilization of distance education and instructional technologies” and embraces interinstitutional collaboration as a means to effectively utilize instructional and distance education technologies.

SCOPE

One of the goals of the Board of Regents in The Study of the UW System in the 21st Century was to “develop and enhance the student-centered learning environment [and] remove the barriers of time and space for students...” Our review focused on certain aspects essential to the achievement of this goal, including the extent of use of distance education technologies, the existence of goals for distance education planning at the institutions, the extent of coordination and collaboration, and the adequacy and congruence of distance-education-related policies.

Review procedures included visits to eight UW System institutions and LI, and surveys of UW System institutions not visited. UW-Parkside was not included in the survey because the institution was conducting a separate review. During our visits and in our surveys, we interviewed university personnel, including chancellors, vice chancellors, directors of continuing education, financial administrators, registrars or assistant registrars, directors/managers of educational technology, librarians, and some academic deans/assistant deans. We also reviewed relevant UWSA and institution policies.

Our review focused exclusively on credit courses offered entirely via distance education since the issuance of the pilot distance education funding policies in 1995.

DISCUSSION

This review will describe the following:

- the extent of use of distance education technologies;
- distance education planning;
- the extent of collaboration between UW System institutions; and

- the adequacy and congruence of various UW System Administration (UWSA) policies related to distance education.

EXTENT OF USE OF DISTANCE EDUCATION TECHNOLOGIES

The use of distance education technologies depends to a certain extent on the faculty's acceptance of the technologies, the availability of and support for those technologies, and the availability of appropriate support services for students. We reviewed the number of distance education courses offered by the UW System institutions. We also reviewed institution initiatives to promote faculty use of distance education technologies and to provide support services to students taking distance education courses, especially at those institutions with more distance education activities.

Number Of Distance Education Courses

The number of distance education courses has doubled between FY 1995-96 and FY 1998-99.

Between FY 1995-96, when the pilot funding policies went into effect, and FY 1998-99, the number of distance education courses offered by UW System institutions has more than doubled. During the four years, UW System institutions offered more than 1,200 distance education courses. Over 21,000 individuals have enrolled in these courses. (See Appendix 1). The number of distance education courses offered in 1998-99, including those offered via the Internet, represents a little over one percent of more than 29,000 credit courses offered by UW System institutions during the same period. (See Appendix 2).

We found a significant disparity in the use of distance education technologies among UW System institutions and among academic units within an institution. Four UW System institutions – Eau Claire, Madison, Stevens Point and Stout – accounted for more than half of the total number of distance education courses offered and about three-quarters of the headcount enrollment in these courses in each of the four years. Half of the number of course sections offered by UW-Madison in FY 1997-98 was offered by three schools – College of Engineering, School of Nursing, and School of Pharmacy. Courses on education and nursing accounted for the bulk of the courses offered by many of the UW comprehensive institutions.

Faculty Development And Support

We talked to some deans and university administrators to get a sense of what proportion of their respective faculty have embraced distance education. The estimates given by these deans varied widely. A number of the deans and administrators we interviewed indicated that the increased workload and the lack of incentives associated with developing and teaching distance education courses were significant factors contributing to the faculty's reluctance to embrace distance education. Some administrators also acknowledged that the level of technology available and the lack of adequate technical support for faculty were also barriers to wider adoption of distance education technologies.

To help achieve widespread faculty acceptance of the technologies, it appears that a broad-based method of developing faculty expertise on the effective use of the technologies and providing adequate technical support to faculty on the technologies is essential. At the system level, UWSA: (a) established the Distance Education Study Group to examine planning for instructional technology that will ensure a technological infrastructure that supports teaching and learning within the UW System and facilitates interaction between the UW and its external learning partners, (b) established the LTDC to provide training and consultation for faculty on instructional material development, (c) created LI to assist faculty with course design and development, and (d) established funding for which institutions could apply to use for faculty-related development. In addition to a system-wide initiative, institutions also took the initiative on their own to develop faculty expertise. This included orientations, brown bag lunches, seminars, conferences, and newsletters.

Institutions had found innovative methods for faculty development and for providing technical support.

The following methods have been used recently by some institutions. Deans and administrators we interviewed believe these methods have enhanced their faculty development initiatives.

- *Providing Financial Incentives.* Faculty members who teach distance education courses as an extra load receive extra compensation. In addition, a number of institutions offer some limited financial incentives for faculty to attend training on the use of instructional technologies, including distance education technologies. UW-Stout provides a \$1,000 stipend to each faculty member who completes the “virtual classroom” workshop series. UW-Oshkosh’s College of Business

Administration offers a \$500 stipend for each faculty member completing a two-day seminar on instructional technologies.

- *Requiring Training on Education Technology.* UW-Platteville and UW-La Crosse allow only faculty members who have completed some training on distance education technologies to teach distance education courses. While this requirement may be a deterrent for some faculty, it appears to solidify distance education as a mainstream academic endeavor, thus making it more natural for faculty to embrace distance education.
- *Making Distance Education a Part of Faculty Load.* UW-Madison's School of Pharmacy and UW-Superior's Education Administration Department consider distance education to be an integral part of their mission and recognize distance education as part of the faculty's regular workload.
- *Paying for Course Development.* UW-Oshkosh's College of Business Administration and UW-Superior pay faculty a stipend for the development of distance education courses.
- *Hiring Faculty Development and Support Specialist.* UW-Superior and UW-Eau Claire have hired staff whose primary responsibilities are to assist with faculty development.
- *Having Technical Support Staff Available in the Classroom.* Depending on the technology used, many UW System institutions assign a staff person in the classroom to provide technical support for the faculty.

When the Board of Regents approved the creation of LI, the Board envisioned it to be the UW System's focal point for the "creation, distribution and evaluation" of digital instructional products and for offering "faculty and staff consultation, training and support." At the time of our visits to UW System institutions, some institutions appeared to favor using their own resources for on-line course development and faculty training and support. This preference, combined with LI's being at full capacity with its current resources, suggests that it may take some time for LI to become the focal point for on-line course development and faculty and staff support at the UW System.

Student Support Services

Availability of appropriate and adequate resources and support for students, and access to these resources and support, are essential to the successful use of distance education technologies. Successful distance education experiences are likely to lead to a greater demand for distance education.

Some institutions initiated activities to provide better support to distance learners.

Since distance education is still evolving, it is too early to conclude what types of support are most appropriate and how to best provide this support. Most institutions agree that student support is an area that needs greater attention. The following activities are initiated by some UW System institutions to better provide support to students:

- UW-Eau Claire assigns a liaison for every off-campus student.
- With the assistance of LI, UW-Platteville develops an on-line system for student registration and assistance. UW-Platteville also initiates the development of a student support structure specifically for distance education.
- UW-Eau Claire funds a position to coordinate library support exclusively for off-campus students.
- UW-Madison, UW-Eau Claire, and UW-Milwaukee establish and maintain proxy servers to allow off-campus students to access library databases.
- UW-Stevens Point offers training and orientation to students interested in or enrolled in distance education courses, describing methods for learning effectively through instructional technologies.

At the Board of Regents' suggestion, UWSA has reconvened the Distance Education Standards Task Force, which developed the distance education pricing principles. Now that the task of developing the pricing principles is complete, the Task Force will begin to address other issues, including standards of service and support for students taking distance education courses and methodology for determining cost.

Faculty hold the key to the use of distance education technologies. Their acceptance and use of distance education technologies are critical to the achievement of the Board of Regents' goal. In light of the disparity in the use of distance education technologies, we

suggest that UW System institutions and UWSA consider intensifying faculty development efforts.

DISTANCE EDUCATION PLANNING

We focused our review of distance education planning on the existence of goals for distance education and the extent of coordination between various units involved in distance education within the institutions.

All institutions reported goals for participating in distance education.

Goals

Distance education is emerging as an important component of higher education. According to the United States Department of Education, as of the fall of 1998-99, “distance education courses were offered at 90 percent of colleges and universities that had enrollment of more than 10,000 students, and at 85 percent of institutions with enrollments of 3,000 to 10,000.” The rapid growth of distance education can pressure institutions to provide distance education prematurely in order to remain competitive. The existence of goals helps to ensure that UW System institutions have some direction or guiding principles for their participation in distance education.

All institutions reported that they used distance education technologies for specific purposes. Generally, UW System institutions have used distance education technologies for these purposes:

Distance education is used to enhance instruction to UW students.

- **Enhancing Instruction to UW Students.** In FY 1997-98, UW System institutions offered 331 distance education courses with 453 sections. The primary target audience of 208 sections, or 46 percent, was on-campus UW students. A common practice of UW System institutions has also been to offer courses with concurrent sections for on-campus and off-campus students. About half of the courses offered each year were offered with a concurrent section for on-campus students.

Distance education enables UW System institutions to outreach to an off-campus audience.

- **Reaching an Off-Campus Audience.** In FY 1997-98, courses targeting off-campus students accounted for the majority of the course sections. The primary targets of these courses were businesses, working professionals, nurses, and teachers.

UW System institutions are able to share resources through distance education.

- **Sharing Resources.** Nearly half of the number of course sections UW System institutions offered in FY 1997-98 were shared with other UW System institutions. A number of

institutions have also formed consortiums to develop collaborative programs.

UW System institutions reported that they plan to continue the use of distance education technologies for the above purposes. A number of institutions also indicated that their goal was to offer more complete degree-granting programs through distance education.

Some UW System institutions reported having a high demand for certain distance education courses. While distance education offers some economic potential, UW System institutions do not generally view distance education as a means of generating revenue at this time. Only one institution, UW-Platteville, reported operating its distance education program entirely on a cost recovery basis.

Coordination

More than other means of educating, distance education requires the participation of many units, including academic departments, libraries, the registrar's office, instructional media, information technology, the business office, and continuing education/outreach. In order to deliver a quality distance education program, these units need to effectively coordinate with each other.

UW System institutions are organized differently from each other for distance education. However, the faculty and academic units hold roles central to all distance education planning. Most institutions also designate a unit to facilitate the development of distance education. This unit is commonly the vice-chancellor's office or the continuing education/outreach department.

At the time of our review, the level of coordination varied widely among UW System institutions. To ensure coordination, some institutions established structures or procedures specifically for distance education. For instance:

Some institutions have established structures and procedures to ensure coordination.

- UW-Milwaukee adopted an infrastructure for non-Internet-based distance education, requiring the designation of a distance education liaison within each school or college and a checklist that must be signed by the appropriate campus personnel before the course can be approved for offering.
- UW-Eau Claire, UW-La Crosse, and UW-Stout established campus-wide distance education councils or oversight

committees to help ensure that necessary delivery and coordination issues were addressed.

- UW-La Crosse developed a resource guide to be used as a tool for the development and approval of distance education courses.
- UW-Stout reorganized its Academic and Student Affairs division to form a new unit, Stout Solutions, to provide the structure needed to provide and implement campus-wide policies and procedures for distance education.

When adequately implemented, these structures or procedures have produced the intended results. However, not all institutions have developed such structures or procedures. Also, not all procedures appear to be comprehensive or to be fully implemented. Our assessment of the way some courses were offered and the manner in which distance education activities were reported revealed that coordination at all UW System institutions could be improved, particularly in the areas of technical support and information sharing.

Some courses were offered with little coordination with other units for technical support for students.

Course Offerings and Technical Support -- University personnel at three UW System institutions — Green Bay, Oshkosh, and Stevens Point — were aware of some distance education courses that appeared to have been offered with little coordination with other support units for technical support needs of the students. These courses were offered through the Internet, using servers that were not maintained as part of the university information technology (IT) networks. At least one to two courses each semester at one institution and three courses during a semester at another institution were offered in this manner. While no known major disruptions occurred, university personnel were concerned about the reliability and stability of these servers.

Distance Education Activities Reporting -- In addition to submitting curricular activities through the Central Data Request (CDR), UW System institutions must also submit annual reports of distance education activities to UWSA. Analysis by the Office of Policy Analysis and Research (OPAR) showed significant variances in the number of courses and enrollment between data submitted manually and through CDR for all institutions. For instance, the manual reports showed 34 more courses and 891 more students than UW System institutions reported through CDR in FY 1997-98.

Distance education activities reported by UW System institutions manually and through CDR varied.

During our visits, we reviewed institutions' processes for reporting distance education activities to determine what factors may have contributed to the variances. We conclude that while a number of other factors, including different reporting timeframes, inefficient method of reporting, and a need for clear and consistent definitions, may have contributed to the variances, the single major contributing factor is the lack of coordination.

At most institutions, different units have responsibility for CDR and manual reporting. Typically, the registrar's office has responsibility for CDR, and either the vice chancellor's office or the continuing education/outreach office has responsibility for the manual reports. To accurately report activities, these units need the proper information from the academic units. Some university personnel who are responsible for the reports indicated that they were not always informed of distance education courses offered or did not receive the proper information from the academic units for reporting.

The above situations could easily be resolved with improved coordination. For instance, more coordination might have enabled institutions to identify the necessary technical support needed by the students and to ensure that the appropriate units receive accurate information for reporting. We suggest that UW System institutions consider developing and strengthening procedures for coordination between the various units involved in distance education. The procedures must be comprehensive to encompass planning, development, design, production, delivery, and reporting.

EXTENT OF COLLABORATION BETWEEN UW SYSTEM INSTITUTIONS

Collaboration is a means to effectively utilize resources and to increase access. UW System Administration supports and promotes collaboration. Collaboration can occur at either the development or delivery (implementation) stage and for a program or for individual courses.

Collaborative Courses and Programs

We found instances of collaboration between UW System institutions at all stages and on both programs and individual courses. The bulk of collaboration activities occurred, however, at the delivery stage where the originating institution transmits the course to another institution (or an institution agrees to receive the course originated from another institution). Of the more than 450

Examples of collaboration between UW System institutions occurred at all stages.

course sections offered in 1997-98, nearly half were transmitted by the originating UW System institutions to other UW System institutions. Depending on the arrangements agreed upon by the collaborating institutions, receiving a course entails a wide range of responsibilities. For some courses, receiving the course involves registering and providing technical and academic support to the students. For other courses, the responsibility is limited to providing access to the facility.

Institutions also reported offering a number of courses for which faculty from different institutions collaborated on curriculum development and which were offered to each other's campus. For example, faculty members in the School of Agriculture at UW-Platteville, UW-Madison, and UW-River Falls jointly developed some courses and team-taught in some cases.

We found a number of collaborative programs between UW System institutions. Even though these programs are still at their early stage of development, they have already demonstrated their potential for efficient resource utilization and increased access. Some of these collaborative programs include:

Institutions have successfully implemented some collaborative programs.

- **The Collaborative Nursing Program (CNP).** CNP targets practicing nurses with an associate degree or diploma in nursing who want to earn a Bachelor of Science Degree in Nursing. The CNP enables practicing nurses to have access to courses and complete a degree that otherwise may not be offered at a campus.
- **The Collaborative Degree Program.** In the past, students at UW two-year centers and residents with an associate degree who wished to obtain a four-year degree from a UW System institution would have to physically transfer to or enroll in that institution. The collaboration between some UW comprehensive institutions and the UW Colleges enables these individuals to obtain the degree through distance education courses at their respective centers.
- **Foreign Language.** In some institutions, the low number of students in foreign language courses cannot justify faculty positions. With a grant from UWSA, a number of institutions have formed a consortium where foreign language resources can be shared.

- **Masters of Business Administration (MBA) Foundation Courses.** Three UW System institutions collaborate in establishing foundation courses for the MBA program. These courses enable the collaborating institutions to have access to expertise that may not be available at any individual campus. Through this collaboration, working professionals are able to complete the entry-level courses via distance education before coming to a campus to complete the degree.
- **Collaborative Women's Studies (WST) Major.** The WST major is an experimental program offering students at five UW System institutions a chance to work toward a major in Women's Studies. The program offers a combination of on-campus courses as well as courses via distance education. Distance education courses enable students at any four-year campus that does not offer a WST major to complete the major without transferring to the campus that offers the major.

The UWSA provided funding for some of these collaborative programs. The UW-Extension also facilitated the planning for and development of some of the programs.

Challenges to Collaboration

University personnel we interviewed viewed collaboration between UW System institutions favorably. They also indicated that more collaboration between UW System institutions could occur but had not because of a number of challenges and disincentives, such as a lack of shared information, increased administrative workload, and restrictive policies.

Structure -- In order for collaboration to occur, an institution needs to know in advance which programs and courses are being considered by other institutions and to have opportunities to enhance the course curriculum. UW System institutions that are members of the collaborative programs or the network consortium, such as the Wisconsin Overlay Network for Distance Education Resources (WONDER), must share course and program planning information with each other. Beyond this, no formal mechanism exists for UW System institutions to share planning information. UW institution officials, including some deans, reported that they often did not learn of some distance education courses until the courses had been developed and were ready to be offered. The UW-Extension will be creating a database that includes information on courses in development as well as those being delivered. This database could

Collaboration is hindered due to the lack of shared information and the different academic schedules.

be the vehicle for the sharing of distance education course planning information

UW System institutions also adopt different academic schedules. The different semester starting and ending times and semester breaks have made it difficult for the collaborating institutions to schedule courses and to provide support to students. In these instances, institutions may choose to develop or offer their own courses rather than collaborating with institutions that have already developed similar courses.

Administration -- When two or more institutions collaborate on a course, UWSA recommends the receiving institutions adopt the Home Institution Registration (HIR) model to admit, register, and award financial aid to students. At the time of our visits and surveys, aspects of the HIR model, particularly the distribution of class and grade lists, were done manually and were reported as being a cumbersome workload item for the receiving institutions.

The Home Institution Registration (HIR) model is an administrative burden.

The UWSA has encouraged collaborating institutions to use an agreement when they collaborate in order to share costs. Institutions reported that they had not used agreements in all instances because the low number of collaborating courses had not justified the resources institutions need to spend on negotiating such an agreement.

Policies -- According to the UW institutions, the pilot policies permit and encourage collaboration. However, the Tuition and Fee Policies for Credit Instruction (Financial Policy and Procedure Paper 44) reportedly have, at times, deterred collaboration. FPPP 44 establishes a credit plateau for students who take courses from multiple institutions. The plateau for undergraduate and graduate students is 12 to 18 credits. While per-credit tuition can be assessed for all credits beyond 18, no tuition is assessed within the 12-to-18-credits plateau. When a student enrolls in more than one institution but is still within the credit plateau, the collaborating institutions receive prorated tuition or the non-matriculated institution processes a tuition remission for its tuition portion. Under this policy, the collaborating institutions end up receiving less in per-credit tuition than they would have had the institutions offered the courses on their own. The policy has a greater impact on UW-Madison and UW-Milwaukee, which charge higher per credit tuition.

The plateau reduces tuition income an institution typically receives.

The Principles for Pricing Distance Education Credit Courses, Degree and Certificate Programs, approved by the BOR in June

1999, appear to ease the restrictions tuition policies impose on UW System institutions. Under the newly adopted policies, institutions will be allowed to charge tuition outside the credit plateau for distance education courses. UW System institutions will also be allowed to increase or decrease the price charged for distance education courses and programs to take advantage of market opportunities.

System of Incentives -- Faculty hold the key role in collaboration. Collaboration efforts to date appear to have resulted due to the professional relationship between faculty members or due to special funding, either from UWSA or other sources. Faculty members have few incentives for collaboration. According to some distance education administrators we interviewed, collaboration has been perceived by some faculty members as a potential threat to their own positions.

While all the obstacles summarized above are real, they are not impossible to overcome. This is evident in collaborative programs that have been successfully implemented, such as the CNP.

Collaboration Success Factors

The CNP was one of the first successful distance education collaborative programs in the UW System and has been held up as a model for other collaboration efforts. We interviewed some CNP administrators to determine what may have contributed to the success of the CNP. The CNP administrators we interviewed reported that the following factors contributed to the program's success:

Implementation of the CNP was successful due to a combination of factors.

- *Maintaining Control and Ownership.* Each collaborating institution is assigned core courses based on faculty expertise. This arrangement allows institutions and faculty to retain their identity and autonomy.
- *Adopting Variable Distance Education Fee Structure.* Under CNP, all collaborating institutions charge the same per-credit tuition for instruction but different distance education fees. The variable distance education fee allows institutions with higher operating costs to get appropriate compensation while still keeping the program affordable.
- *Instilling a Universal Interest.* Collaborating institutions are constantly reminded of the main purpose of the program.

Keeping a focus on program purpose has helped to resolve differences.

- *Securing UWSA and Institution Administration Support.* Development of the CNP received considerable administrative and financial support from UWSA and institution administrations.
- *Embracing the Value of Collaboration.* Collaborative programs do not necessarily result in immediate cost savings. However, collaborative programs, such as the CNP, offer students access to faculty expertise at other campuses that may not be available in their own campuses. Furthermore, collaboration reduces competition for resources or duplication of programs between UW System institutions.

In addition, the development of the CNP was facilitated by the UW-Extension, a neutral party that had nothing to gain financially. CNP administrators we interviewed agreed that this type of facilitation was critical to successful collaboration in this instance.

The UW System is more likely to make use of distance education through collaborative efforts rather than through the acts of a few institutions or through all institutions acting individually. Our review indicates that collaboration has the potential of producing cost savings as well as increasing access. Even though collaboration may not be suitable in all situations and some barriers to collaboration do exist, we suggest that UW System institutions consider increasing efforts to seek collaboration whenever possible. It has even been suggested that some kind of mechanism be established to reinvest tuition revenues from collaborative efforts in order to further their development or innovation.

ADEQUACY AND CONGRUENCE OF VARIOUS DISTANCE-EDUCATION-RELATED POLICIES

In addition to the procedures institutions have developed to ensure coordination, some institutions have also established policies for distance education. These policies pertain largely to fee assessment, facility use, and class scheduling. UW System institutions have relied almost exclusively on UWSA policies for guidance.

UWSA distance-education-related policies have provided adequate guidance.

UW System institutions indicated that UWSA distance-education-related policies, for the most part, have provided adequate guidance. In addition, the pricing principles recently adopted by the BOR also

appear to ease the restrictions which, according to some UW System institutions, have hindered their competitiveness. Areas in which UWSA may need to provide additional guidance and UW System institutions may need to establish policies or procedures are online course development, distance education fees, and provisions in the recently passed federal legislation on copyright.

Distance Education Fee

The pilot funding policies allow UW System institutions to charge a distance education fee and delineate what costs can be included in the fee. These costs include transmission, site support, material, and license or vendor fee. The policies discourage including some costs in the fee, such as needs assessment, instructor salaries, development, infrastructure, equipment, registration, admissions, library access, and computer access.

Methodologies used to determine a distance education fee vary.

We found that not all institutions charge a distance education fee. Among those institutions that do charge a fee, some charge a uniform fee while others charge variable fees, depending on course delivery medium. While institutions that charge a distance education fee appear to include only the appropriate costs, the methodologies institutions used to estimate the fee vary widely. Also, all institutions reported making some type of adjustments to the estimated fee. In most cases, institutions have ended up reducing the estimated fee. There appears to be no consistent basis for making the final adjustments.

One of the recently-adopted principles for pricing distance education courses and degree and certificate programs addresses the need for UW System institutions to use common methodology to identify distance education costs. Our review of the variety of methodologies for determining fees indicates UWSA may need to provide guidance in addition to that provided in the pilot funding policies.

Copyright

Distance education involves the use and transmission of copyrighted materials in ways that typically do not occur in the traditional classroom. Institutions involved in distance education need to be concerned about obtaining the rights to use the materials and protecting the materials from misuse.

UWSA issued a policy on ownership, use and control of copyrightable instruction materials (General Administrative Policy Paper 27). GAPP 27 delineates conditions for ownership interests and use of the produced materials. UW System institutions found GAPP 27 to be adequate in addressing issues for which the policy was intended. For other copyright issues that GAPP 27 does not address, such as infringement and fair use, UW System institutions relied largely on federal regulations in consultation with institution legal counsel. At the time of our visits and survey, three UW System institutions – Green Bay, Milwaukee, and UW Colleges – were developing policies to address copyright-related concerns specific to their campuses. To promote better understanding of the issues related to copyrights, UW System institutions periodically have held workshops and seminars for faculty.

UWSA and UW System institutions may need to establish procedures to implement the Digital Millennium Copyright Act (DMCA).

Federal copyright law enacted in 1976 provides little guidance for issues related to distance education. In 1998, Congress passed the Digital Millennium Copyright Act (DMCA) and the President signed it into law. This legislation is quite complex but does address some issues related to distance education. The law provides limited protection for higher education institutions regarding on-line copyright infringement liability for university computer networks, provided the institutions meet certain conditions.

It may not be necessary for UWSA and UW System institutions to develop policies on fair use. However, since UW System institutions are moving toward offering more on-line courses, UWSA and the institutions may need to establish procedures to (a) implement provisions in the DMCA and (b) ensure that all institution units associated with activities regulated by the Copyright Act are aware of and comply with the applicable regulations.

As a result of UW System institutions' practices related to distance education fees and new federal legislation related to copyright, we suggest that UWSA and UW System institutions consider developing more comprehensive guidelines for estimating distance education fees and establishing procedures to implement provisions of the new law.

CONCLUSION

Our review found significant recent growth in distance education activities among most UW System institutions. All institutions

reported having goals for distance education, but coordination between the units involved in distance education could be improved. UW System institutions have collaborated with each other on some programs and courses. Collaboration has not been maximized because of a number of challenges and disincentives. From the Collaborative Nursing Program (CNP), we have identified factors that may help promote collaboration. We also have identified some policy areas that may need to be evaluated.

In order to achieve the Board of Regents' goal for distance education, we suggest the following areas for UW System institutions and UWSA consideration:

- intensifying faculty development efforts in order to gain widespread acceptance and use of distance education technologies by the faculty;
- developing and strengthening procedures for coordination between the various units involved in distance education, including procedures that encompass planning, development, design, production, delivery, and reporting;
- increasing efforts to seek more collaboration; and
- evaluating aspects of distance-education-related policies, which may help to promote the development of distance education, to forge a consistent basis for estimating distance education fees, and to foster collaboration between UW System institutions.

APPENDIX 1

**NUMBER OF DISTANCE EDUCATION COURSES AND ENROLLMENT
FY 1995-96 TO 1998-99
(SUMMER TERMS EXCLUDED)**

Institution	FY 1995-96			FY 1996-97			FY 1997-98			FY 1998-99 **		
	Number of Courses	Total Enrollment	Average Enrollment per Course	Number of Courses	Total Enrollment	Average Enrollment per Course	Number of Courses	Total Enrollment	Average Enrollment per Course	Number of Courses	Total Enrollment	Average Enrollment per Course
Madison	43	1,320	31	56	1,716	31	70	2,150	31	97	2,771	29
Milwaukee	6	61	10	20	191	10	16	125	8	32	258	8
Eau Claire	26	503	19	19	867	46	57	1,247	22	57	752	13
Green Bay	5	40	8	25	43	2	10	126	13	21	194	9
La Crosse	6	22	4	11	75	7	13	94	7	18	134	7
Oshkosh	6	109	18	20	220	11	19	245	13	28	377	13
Parkside *	2	11	6				15	81	5	19	106	6
Platteville	10	351	35	6	132	22	10	116	12	9	81	9
River Falls	14	138	10	5	80	16	11	151	14	5	114	23
Stevens Point	12	402	34	22	455	21	25	356	14	39	705	18
Stout	19	346	18	39	834	21	48	793	17	46	851	19
Superior	14	62	4	12	56	5	13	43	3	10	52	5
Whitewater	6	58	10	7	105	15	12	155	13	17	233	14
Colleges	12	114	10	19	247	13	17	286	17	41	809	20
TOTAL	181	3,537	20	261	5,021	19	336	5,968	18	439	7,437	17

* Data for FY 1996-97 are not available.

** Data for FY 1998-99 are preliminary.

Source: UW System institutions and UWSA Office of Policy Analysis and Research

APPENDIX 2

**NUMBER OF DISTANCE EDUCATION COURSES
AS A PROPORTION OF TOTAL NUMBER OF CREDIT COURSES
FY 1995-96 TO 1998-99
(SUMMER TERMS EXCLUDED)**

Institution	FY 1995-96			FY 1996-97			FY 1997-98			FY 1998-99 ***		
	Number of DE Courses	Total Number of Credit Courses	Percentage	Number of DE Courses	Total Number of Credit Courses	Percentage	Number of DE Courses	Total Number of Credit Courses	Percentage	Number of DE Courses	Total Number of Credit Courses	Percentage
Madison	43	8,175	0.5%	56	8,174	0.7%	70	8,187	0.9%	97	8,159	1.2%
Milwaukee	6	4,180	0.1%	20	4,174	0.5%	16	4,317	0.4%	32	4,283	0.7%
Eau Claire	26	2,220	1.2%	19	2,274	0.8%	57	2,270	2.5%	57	2,326	2.5%
Green Bay	5	1,289	0.4%	25	1,272	2.0%	10	1,296	0.8%	21	1,326	1.6%
La Crosse	6	1,792	0.3%	11	1,821	0.6%	13	1,895	0.7%	18	1,949	0.9%
Oshkosh	6	2,106	0.3%	20	2,143	0.9%	19	2,133	0.9%	28	2,159	1.3%
Parkside *	2	1,048	0.2%				15	1,109	1.4%	19	1,092	1.7%
Platteville **	10	1,290	0.8%	6	1,298	0.5%	10	1,300	0.8%			
River Falls	14	1,538	0.9%	5	1,515	0.3%	11	1,495	0.7%	5	1,054	0.5%
Stevens Point	12	1,931	0.6%	22	1,896	1.2%	25	1,888	1.3%	39	1,899	2.1%
Stout	19	1,703	1.1%	39	1,724	2.3%	48	1,720	2.8%	46	1,730	2.7%
Superior	14	1,280	1.1%	12	1,293	0.9%	13	1,297	1.0%	10	1,277	0.8%
Whitewater	6	1,818	0.3%	7	1,854	0.4%	12	1,860	0.6%	17	1,841	0.9%
Colleges	12	800	1.5%	19	788	2.4%	17	2,750	0.6%	41	812	5.0%
TOTAL	181	31,170	0.6%	261	30,226	0.9%	336	33,517	1.0%	430	29,907	1.4%

* Data for FY 1996-97 are not available.

** Total number of credit courses for Platteville is not available due to information system conversion.

*** Data for FY 1998-99 are preliminary.

Source: UWSA Office of Policy Analysis and Research and Central Data Request