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## **Basic Principles of the CSUN Approach to Crafting Online Degree and Certificate Programs**

CSUN created a distance learning unit (DL) in the university's Tseng College: Graduate, International and Midcareer Education (Tseng College) for online programs. This unit works with faculty in the production, revision and ongoing support of fully online degree and certificate programs, whether they are funded from the General Fund or through self-support. The Tseng College through its DL unit is also responsible for working with faculty in the production, revision and ongoing support of CSUN's self-support hybrid degree and certificate programs.

CSUN does not consider excellence in online teaching and learning as primarily an issue of technology, although thoughtful and effective use of technology is a component. Rather, excellence in online and hybrid degree and certificate programs is based solidly on the same issues and principles that make face-to-face programs distinctive – the excellence of CSUN faculty and the care taken by faculty in crafting and continuously improving the curriculum, in light of insights gained through assessment, changes in fields/disciplines, possibilities presented by model national and international forefront programs, and developments in professional practice in fields/disciplines. These programs provide meaningful educational experiences that lead to high levels of student achievement and the best use of available resources and instructional options. This comprehensive approach fosters student engagement and success in terms of on-time graduation, careers after graduation, commitment to ongoing learning, and breadth and depth of understanding in students' professional, community and personal lives. CSUN faculty are committed to instructional excellence and innovation in instructional strategies; enhancing the educational relationship between students and faculty; faculty and university support of student success; and extensive support of faculty efforts provided through the Tseng College in collaboration with academic colleges, departments, faculty and other administrative units.

Online degree and credit certificate programs are subject to the same CSU and CSUN academic standards, policies and process (including academic approvals and program review/assessment) as are applicable to any face-to-face CSUN program. Departmental and faculty responsibility for the curriculum is the same for face-to-face and fully online or hybrid degree and credit certificate programs. Fully online and hybrid online degree and credit certificate programs are subject to all Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) accreditation standards, and the standards of relevant special accreditors. Students in fully online and hybrid degree and credit certificate programs are subject to the same CSU and CSUN policies governing academic honesty, conduct, grades and grade appeals as students in face-to-face programs.

Academic decisions about whether a single-discipline degree or credit certificate program should be offered online are made by CSUN's academic department and its faculty for single-discipline programs. The decision to go forward is made in consultation with the dean of the academic college in which the department resides. Academic decisions about whether multidisciplinary degree or credit certificate programs should be offered online or hybrid are made by the academic college(s) in which the courses reside and, in turn, with each department contributing a course(s) and/or modules to that multidisciplinary program.

DL has staff prepared in instructional design and related fields (human factors, educational

technology, curriculum and instruction, and the like) at the master's or doctoral levels. DL also has a staff of technical specialists prepared at the master's or baccalaureate levels in computer science or a related technical field. All these staff members have experience working with faculty in the production and support phases of CSUN's online degree and certificate programs.

Fully online and self-support hybrid degree and certificate programs are offered in a cohort format with an integrated curriculum. One course builds upon another, with a focus on making the program an excellent and distinctive educational experience that helps students achieve significant learning outcomes at both the course and program level.

The university does not assume that the best approach for fully online and hybrid degree and certificate programs is to transfer the structure and strategy of a face-to-face course to an online setting. Rather, CSUN assumes that crafting a strong online course and, in turn, a successful online program requires a reconsideration of each course in light of the distinctive teaching and learning capacities offered by the online learning environment. In that light, CSUN supports each faculty member (with time and compensation) who teaches in an online degree or certificate program by exploring the online options and possibilities that are right for the program, course and instructional style/preferences.

DL instructional design staff work individually with each faculty member teaching in an online degree or certificate program to explore the options and possibilities afforded by the online educational environment. The goal is to prepare the faculty member to teach online and to help that faculty member craft an individualized online course in terms of achieving learning outcomes, presenting appropriate materials for the course, choosing ways to engage students to achieve the desired educational dynamic, designing assignments, and implementing effective instructional strategies and tools.

CSUN approaches the relationship between each faculty member and their course for its fully online and hybrid degree and certificate programs the same way as it does for its face-to-face programs. That is, if a different faculty member is assigned to teach a given course in an online degree or credit certificate program, they will be supported in the crafting of their course in the same way as the prior faculty member teaching the course. CSUN does not create "template" online courses that instructors are expected to teach. Rather CSUN is committed to working through its Tseng College to ensure that all fully online and hybrid degree and certificate programs provide those enrolled with a true CSUN educational experience rooted in educational relationships between each faculty member and students in the specific course and program.

DL provides a two-week orientation and training program for students who enroll in online degree or certificate programs. This prepares students for success in the online educational environment and in the specific online program. Further, DL and student support program managers/coordinators in the Tseng College provide comprehensive and ongoing student support from the start to the completion of each cohort.

CSUN has been offering fully online degree programs for over 18 years. The Tseng College and its DL instructional design staff and technical team work with each faculty member teaching in an online degree or certificate program to craft and support a course that is educationally robust in terms of achieving high levels of student success. Currently, on-time graduation rates in CSUN online degree and certificate programs range from a low of 63.8% to a high of 100%, with most programs achieving on-time graduation rate percentages in the percent range between the 70s and low to mid-90s.