

McLennan Community College



April 1, 2003

Janet Beinke
Program Director
Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board
P.O. Box 12788
Austin, Texas 78711

Dear Ms. Beinke:

The enclosed document contains the revised Distance Education Plan for McLennan Community College. We have incorporated each of the suggested changes provided by the subcommittee of the Distance Education Advisory Committee.

Please let me know if you have any questions about the revised document.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Paul Illich", written in a cursive style.

Paul Illich
Sr. Director of Institutional Effectiveness and Planning
(254) 299-8636; pillich@mcclennan.edu

McLennan Community College

1400 College Drive • Waco, Texas 76708 • (254) 299-8000 • www.mclennan.edu
An Equal Opportunity Institution

McLennan Community College



Institutional Plan for Distance Education

*Submitted to the Texas Higher Education
Coordinating Board*

*Paul Illich
1400 College Drive
Waco, TX 76708
(254) 299-8636
pai@mcc.cc.tx.us*

Table of Contents

Current Distance Education Programs	3
Institutional Issues	4
Educational Programs	11
Faculty	12
Student Support Services	14
Distance Education Facilities and Support Services	14
Appendixes	16

DEGREE AND CERTIFICATE PROGRAMS EXPORTED VIA DISTANCE EDUCATION AND OFF CAMPUS DELIVERY

Program Name and Degree Designation	Program CIP Code	Credit [C] / Non-Credit [NC]	Credit [C] or Next Year [NY] Program	Percent Delivered by Distance or Off-Campus Education*	Type of Delivery	Delivered Where and to Individuals [I] or Groups [G]
General Studies	2401020001	C	C	60%	Internet	Computers [I]
Computer Information Systems	1102011000	C	C	50%	Internet	Computers [I]
Psychology	4201010001	C	C	55%	Internet	Computers [I]
Speech	2310015312	C	C	54%	Internet	Computers [I]
Certificate Microcomputer Applications	1103010000	C	C	54%	Internet	Computers [I]
General Business	5201010000	C	C	52%	Internet	Computers [I]

Note: The College has determined that it is in compliance with each of the items on the planning checklist.

Section I: Institutional Issues

1. ***The institution documents compliance with The Principles of Good Practice for Electronically Offered Academic Degree and Certificate Programs. (The UT Telecampus' course self-study guide is an example of compliance documentation. It is found at: <http://www.thecb.state.tx.us/DistanceEd/PPGCourseGuide.pdf>.)***

For the past several years the College has utilized a course proposal and development system designed to ensure that distance education courses are of equal quality to traditional classes. However, in developing the current distance education plan the Vice President of Instruction along with other college administrators and faculty carefully evaluated the College's course proposal and development processes based on the principles of good practice described above. Using the results of this review, the College developed its own good practices checklist designed to complement the College's current course proposal and course development processes. A copy of the new good practices checklist is provided in Appendix 1. Given these actions, the College affirms that it is in compliance with *The Principles of Good Practice for Electronically Offered Academic Degree and Certificate Programs*.

The College has also provided all necessary documentation in regard to its distance education programs to the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. In April 2002 the College had its reaffirmation visit from the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. The College has not received its official report at this time but will respond appropriately to any recommendations and/or suggestions in regard to distance education.

2. ***Distance education is consistent with the institution's educational mission. Please explain how it is consistent and attach appropriate mission statement or goals, if pertinent.***

The mission of the Distance Education program is as follows:

The College is committed to excellence in all of its distance education endeavors. McLennan Community College's Distance education programs seek to enhance student learning by providing a comprehensive range of educational opportunities via dynamic virtual technologies that are not limited by time or space. McLennan Community College affirms its commitment to provide equal access to

educational programs and support services for all participants in distance education.

This mission is consistent with the institution's educational mission as well as the College's 1999-2003 Strategic Plan (See Appendix 2).

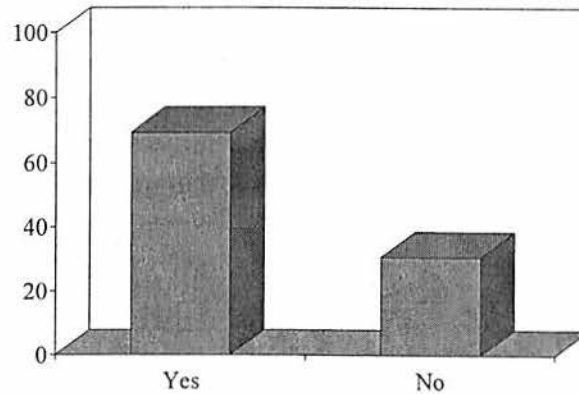
- 3. The institution has assessed that a market exists for distance education to be delivered by the institution, particularly when delivering complete degree and certificate programs. What are the market factors that caused your institution to engage in distance learning? Please explain the results of this assessment. (For example, have you used as a benchmark the activities of institutions similar to yours?)***

McLennan Community College (MCC) has been providing distance education courses for well over a decade. Prior to 1997, distance education courses were limited to television-based courses. However, the College offered its first Internet-based course in 1997 and has observed dramatic enrollment growth in Internet-based courses since that time. Internet course enrollment increased from less than 20 in the fall 1997 semester to over 600 in the spring 2002 semester. The College's expansion of distance education courses was based on a comprehensive assessment of the needs of students and the local community. For the past several years, the College has conducted an annual student satisfaction survey to identify key student characteristics and to assess the reasons students attend MCC. These surveys are conducted on a random sample of 400 to 600 students, ensuring that the results are representative of all students attending MCC. The results from these surveys have consistently shown that the majority of students identify the ability to take courses at times that are convenient for their schedules as a major reason for attending MCC. In addition, the results revealed that around 75% of MCC students work at least part-time and that the majority of students identify the ability to work while attending school as a major reason for attending MCC.

In addition to annual student satisfaction surveys, the College conducts a comprehensive community survey every five years to determine the educational needs of the local community. The most recent survey was completed in Spring 2000. The survey included several questions related to distance education opportunities. The results in regard to general interest in Internet-based courses are shown below.

MCC Community Survey Interest in Internet Courses

If available, would you or someone in your family likely take at least one Internet-based course offered by MCC in the next three years?



Margin of Error +/- 4%

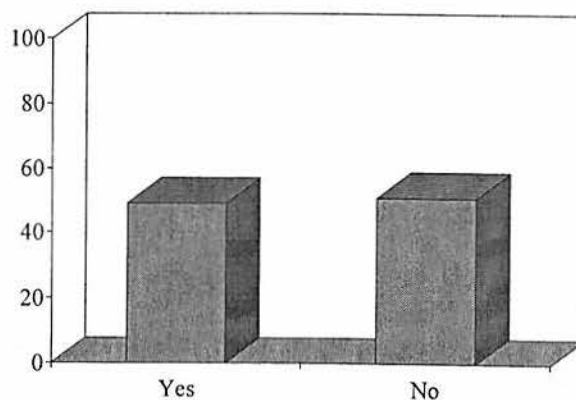
Note: 601 community members participated in this survey

Source: MCC Community Survey (2000)

Close to 70% of the respondents to the community survey indicated that they, or someone in their family, would likely enroll in an Internet-based course. In addition, the survey also included a question designed to determine the level of community access to Internet-based course. The results are shown below.

MCC Community Survey Access to Internet Courses

Do you have a personal computer with Internet access within your home?



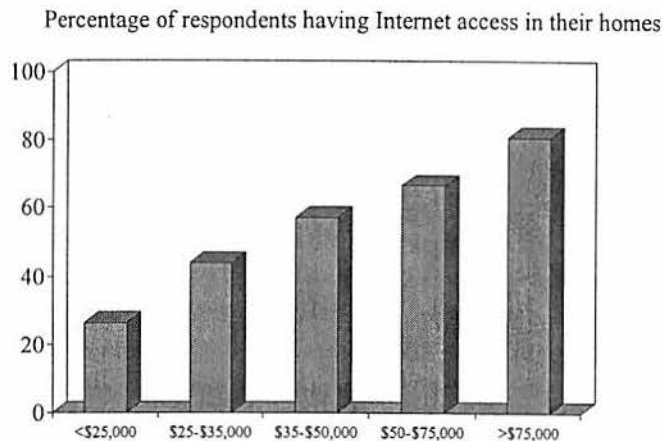
Margin of Error +/- 4%

Note: 601 community members participated in this survey

Source: MCC Community Survey (2000)

The results showed that about half of the respondents to the survey had a home computer with Internet access. An additional analysis revealed that income was the primary predictor of whether a household had Internet access. The results from this analysis are shown below.

MCC Community Survey Access to Internet Courses Programs by Income



Margin of Error +/- 4%

Note: 601 community members participated in this survey

Source: MCC Community Survey (2000)

The results from the community survey combined with the results from several student satisfaction surveys were used to assess the market for Internet-based courses and other distance education opportunities. The College determined that there was a strong need for distance education opportunities within the local community and that these opportunities needed to be available for all members of the community irrespective of income level. The College has implemented a variety of strategies designed to tap into the demand for distance education opportunities. In addition, the College continues to utilize a variety of assessment activities to ensure that there is a sufficient market for distance education opportunities and that the distance education opportunities offered by the College are appropriate for this market.

In addition to determining whether there is an interest in taking courses via distance education, the College determines the type of offerings through institutional research reports that identify “high demand” courses. These courses are at or near full capacity each semester. For example, English 1301 represents a course where more than 90% of seats available are filled each semester. This finding indicates that there is a high demand for this course. The College uses these kinds of reports to identify courses that may be candidates for distance education courses.

- 4. The institution evaluates the overall effectiveness of distance education courses and programs (such as student learning, student retention, the effectiveness of the utilized technology, mechanisms to provide student feedback during the course, and comparability with campus-based programs) and the evaluation process is incorporated into overall institutional effectiveness efforts. Please summarize the process, recent data collections and their analyses, and remedial actions taken.***

The College continually monitors the effectiveness of its distance education courses in two ways. First, all distance education courses are evaluated according to the same faculty and course evaluation policy used for classroom courses. All Internet-based courses have access to an online evaluation form that allows students to complete the form via the Internet. The form includes open-ended questions where students can offer suggestions for course improvement. Importantly, the online form is designed to ensure that a student's results are anonymous. Instructors utilize evaluation results to improve their courses. The online evaluation form also contains several general questions designed to determine the level of computer experience among students, whether students access courses from their home or from another site, how often they access the website, and several other related issues. Second, the College conducts a comprehensive grade distribution report for all distance education courses each semester. These results are compared with classroom versions of the courses to identify potential problems. A copy of the online form is provided in Appendix 3. Both of the assessment activities described above represent ongoing activities that are integral to the College's institutional effectiveness program.

The Spring 2002 Grade Distribution Report showed that the course attrition rates for Internet-based courses were considerably higher than traditional courses. Although the attrition rates have decreased in recent years due to the implementation of a variety of strategies, the College continues to seek ways to improve course attrition rates. For example, the College's Center for Instructional Innovation offers a course titled "Effective Online Instruction" at least twice a year and upon demand to help instructors improve the quality of their distance education courses. A copy of the curriculum used in this course is provided in Appendix 4.

- 5. The institution has an officer responsible for distance learning in a position that is appropriate for the institution and the size of the distance education program. Describe the placement of the officer in the institution's organization; attach an organization chart; and explain how this provides the appropriate oversight of programs, and of faculty and student support. Also identify the contact person or office at the institution where questions are answered for distance learners and for others.***

The Vice-President of Instruction oversees the instructional and administrative procedures of distance education. The Vice-President of Instruction is responsible for setting the College's distance education policy and for determining the size and scope of the programs. Specific matters pertaining to distance education such as concurrent courses at area high schools, web-based courses for service area students, telecourses, and implementation and maintenance of interactive two-way video classes and extension site classes are coordinated/implemented by the College's division directors. Division directors are also responsible for evaluating distance education faculty and programs. The College employs an Extended Campus Specialist who works with the division directors in the scheduling and support of distance education courses. Training of faculty in the use of Distance Education technologies is the responsibility of the Instructional Design Specialist. The organizational charts outlining these areas of responsibility are provided in Appendix 5.

- 6. The institution has established requirements for admissions, satisfactory student progress, and graduation requirements for distance education . Please summarize requirements. Please explain in more detail and attach relevant policies if these requirements differ from those of traditional students.***

Distance Education students at McLennan Community College must meet the same requirements as traditional students at the college (See Appendix 6, Policy B-XVII, Section A-3 and A-4).

- 7. Policies relevant to transcripting, grading, and transfer credentials are in place. Please explain and attach relevant policies if they are different from on-campus classes.***

McLennan Community College has the same procedures in place for Distance Education students regarding transcripting, grading, and transfer credentials as for traditional students.

- 8. The institution has a process in place to address the needs of distance learners who fall under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Please explain how ADA compliance for distance education is handled at your institution.***

Special assistance is provided for both on-campus and distance education students who have diagnosed physical or leaning disabilities. Through the Student Support Services program, the college provides these students special assistance with registration, tutoring, and specialized equipment. To receive these services students are required to contact Student Support Services as indicated in the College's 2001-2003 Catalog. A complete listing of the services provided by Student Support Services is also located in the College's 2001-2003 Catalog (See Appendix 7).

9. SACS and other professional credentialing agencies have been notified, as appropriate. Please explain the status of these notifications.

The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) have been notified of all additions/changes to the College's distance education programs. In February 2002, the College notified SACS of six degree programs where students would be able to take fifty percent or more of their course work through internet-based instruction. This issue was recently addressed by SACS during the College's reaffirmation visit in April 2002. Members of the reaffirmation visiting team examined appropriate documentation provided in the College's self-study report. SACS has indicated that no additional action in regard to this substantive change is needed at this time.

A copy of a letter from the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools indicating that no additional documentation is needed in regard to the College's distance education programs is provided in Appendix 8.

10. The institution has sufficient financial resources to initiate quality distance learning courses and programs and a financial plan to maintain them. Please describe how the capital and operating budgets for distance education infrastructure and support services are set. 11. There is a financial plan for maintaining the support systems needed for the activities, including upgrading of systems currently being used.

McLennan Community College has made a commitment to the infusion of technology in the teaching and learning process throughout the institution including all distance education initiatives. The College's Board of Trustees has approved a \$4 per semester hour technology fee that helps support line items in the operating budget for "required" technology expenses (software licensing agreements, maintenance agreements, etc.) and "requested" technology expenses (upgrading or replacing current equipment/software or expanding into new technologies). In addition, the institution budgets funds for a computer services department, a network services department, the Center for Instructional Innovation, an on-line librarian, a webmaster, and other distance education related departments.

Priorities for funding for distance education infrastructure and support services are set by the president with assistance from the Technology Committee which consists of the vice president for business services, the vice president for instruction, the senior director for technology, and the director of network services. The director of network services and the associate dean for instructional innovation complete an annual analysis of current technology needs for distance education. The report is forwarded to the Technology Committee. In addition, faculty have input through the budgeting process by completing a "technology

request form” and forwarding it through administrative channels. The Technology Committee reviews all requests and the analysis report and forwards to the president a prioritized list of possible technology expenditures for the next fiscal year.

A similar process is followed when determining capital expenditures for distance education. Capital improvements requests are forwarded through administrative channels to the vice president for business services. She meets with the vice president for instruction and the president to determine the priorities for capital funds expenditures. The Board of Trustees approves the capital budget on an annual basis.

Section II: Educational Programs

- 1. The institution has procedures in place for planning, development, approval and review of quality distance education programs. Please explain the process for programs (not for individual courses).***

The only programs that are currently offered via distance education were first developed as traditional classroom programs. All distance education programs must follow the same comprehensive development and approval process as traditional on-campus programs. Workforce education programs offered via distance education use the comprehensive planning and development process required by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board. This process involves a comprehensive application procedure that requires justification for the need of the proposed program as well as documentation related to the proposed curriculum, financial support, and other critical program administration issues. Academic programs offered via distance education use an institutional process, which requires all elements of the program to be reviewed and approved by the College's Instructional Council, and appropriate administrators.

All programs offered via distance education use the same evaluation process as the College's traditional programs. For example, all instructors associated with distance education programs are evaluated in the same fashion as instructors teaching traditional courses. In addition, faculty and administrators utilize performance reports each semester to assess the quality of distance education programs. Workforce education programs are also evaluated based on the Institutional Effectiveness Measures and Standards established by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board. Such programs are evaluated every five year through either a bench review process and/or an on-site review process. In addition, all of the College's workforce education programs are reviewed annually through the annual Perkins application process.

These evaluation and assessment activities along with the many other aspects of the College's comprehensive evaluation program ensure that distance education programs are regularly reviewed and modified based on evaluation results.

- 2. The institution has plans for assessing student learning outcomes, student retention, and student satisfaction in its distance education programs. Please explain any differences in procedures compared to traditional on-campus format. You are encouraged to submit existing summaries of meaningful conclusions drawn from data, as you would provide to SACS.***

As noted in the previous section, the College uses the same comprehensive evaluation process for its distance education and traditional programs. The evaluation process includes student evaluations of instructors, enrollment trends, course attrition trends, trends in pass rates, as well as satisfaction with various

aspects of distance education programs. Although the results from academic performance reports show that the course attrition rates are higher among distance education courses, the College is implementing a variety of solutions designed to address this issue. Other reports show that enrollment in distance education programs has grown substantially in recent years and that the College will need to provide training for its current faculty to meet the increasing demand in distance education courses.

One small difference in the evaluation procedures for distance education courses offered via the Internet is that students are asked to evaluate the instructor and course via an online form. In addition, the wording of the form is slightly different than the classroom version of the form. The online evaluation also includes questions related to a student's past experience with distance education courses and with technical aspects of distance education courses. A copy of the most recent report is provided in Appendix 3. The report shows that students were very satisfied with their Internet courses and that about 90% of students completing the survey would recommend the instructor of their Internet course.

- 3. Explain procedures that are in place to evaluate all instructional materials developed by other organizations or institutions prior to use in distance education.***

All instructional materials developed by other organizations or institutions are subject to the same criteria as campus-provided distance education courses (See Appendix 6, Policy B-XVII, Section A-2; Appendix 7, Page 1, paragraph 4).

Section III: Faculty

- 1. The qualifications for distance education faculty are the same as faculty teaching the same courses in a traditional on-campus format. Please describe rationale applied for making exceptions.***

Faculty teaching distance education classes are required to have the same credentials, and they operate under the same professional guidelines as faculty teaching on campus (See Appendix 6, Policy B-XVII, Section B-1).

- 2. The institution provides orientation and training for faculty involved in distance education programs. Please describe the faculty training activities.***

Effective July 1, 2001, faculty new to distance education are required to be trained in distance education practices. Faculty learn effective online teaching techniques, obtain suggestions for better on-line retention, discuss how to advise the online student, and research how to provide better student support in online courses. Using Blackboard as a platform, participants learn to manipulate the

software from a student and an instructor's prospective (See Appendix 6, Policy B-XVII, Section B-2; Appendix 7, Section E-2).

- 3. Procedures are in place for appropriate evaluation of faculty involved in the distance education program (such as procedures that evaluate faculty-student interaction). Please describe procedures and attach instruments.***

Distance Education faculty are evaluated in the same manner as on-campus faculty (See Appendix 6). The Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Planning compiles the evaluations and feedback is provided to the Vice-President of Instruction, Deans, Division Directors, and the faculty member (See Appendix 6, Policy B-XVII - B.1).

- 4. A policy exists that addresses faculty teaching load for those involved in distance education. Please attach the policy and explain rationale.***

Faculty teaching load (See Appendix 6, Policy B-XVII - B-4) is the same for distance education courses as for on-campus courses.

- 5. A process exists for evaluating the credentials of faculty employed by other institutions who are teaching courses for which your institution is awarding credit.***

Faculty members from other regionally accredited institutions who teach "imported" distance education courses for MCC shall be considered to hold appropriate credentials for teaching the course. The Extended Campus Specialist shall certify the credentials of any faculty member teaching an imported distance education course before the course is taught (See Appendix 6, Policy B-XVII - B-8).

- 6. The institution has policies on intellectual property, faculty compensation, copyright guidelines, and the distribution of revenue (if applicable) that are appropriate for distance education. Summarize policies that address issues raised by distance education.***

McLennan Community College 's policy on intellectual property, faculty compensation, copyright guidelines, and other distance education issues are the same for all faculty members (See Appendix 6, Policy B-XVII - B-5).

Section IV: Student Support Services

- 1. *The institution provides distance learners access to appropriate student services. Please describe the support services to distance education students in each of the following areas and how they are evaluated, admissions, registration, academic advising, remedial services, placement services, testing and assessment, orientation, computing departments, financial aid offices, counseling, and help desk/hot line.***

Students at McLennan Community College are provided academic and student support services - including academic advising, counseling, library and other learning resources, tutoring services, and financial aid-comparable to those available for on-campus students (See Appendix 5 Policy B-XVII, Section C). Registration and academic advising are available through the College's Web Advisor system, which is an online student services module that allows students to register and receive advising assistance. The College maintains current financial aid information, testing and assessment procedures, and placement procedures on its Web site. Complete step-by-step instructions on how to enroll in the College is included on the Web site under the "Students" section. This section also includes contact information for financial aid, counseling, and other assistance.

Whether distance education students have appropriate access to these services is evaluated as a part of the course approval process. The Office of the Vice President of Instruction verifies that each course has appropriate links to various student support services. Satisfaction through these services is evaluated each year through a comprehensive student satisfaction survey and/or through specific evaluation instruments. The survey involves a random sample of all credit students. A copy of the results from the most recent student satisfaction survey is included in Appendix 9.

- 2. *Distance learners have access to library resources of an appropriate breadth and quality for the distance education program(s) offered. Please provide on-line address and describe resources, including any difference in service for off-campus and for instructional telecommunications students.***

The McLennan Community College library provides distance education students access to all library resources regardless of their location. Students can access the library website and have access to the circulating collection, electronic databases, reserves, and other resources. Students can call the library or send a request for materials electronically. Librarians and support staff are available for obtaining materials to mail or hold for loan, answer reference questions, fax materials to off campus sites, etc. Students can also request the Tex Share card by telephone and provide information to obtain the card. All distance learners are given a brochure outlining library services and resources and times of service and contact phone

numbers. Therefore distance learners have access to library resources of an appropriate breadth and quality for the distance education programs offered. The link to the library is <http://mccweb.mcc.cc.tx.us/library/>.

Section V: Distance Education Facilities and Support Services

- 1. The institution has available the facilities and equipment necessary to deliver its distance learning program. Please describe, if brief, current infrastructure and procedures for evaluating its effectiveness.**

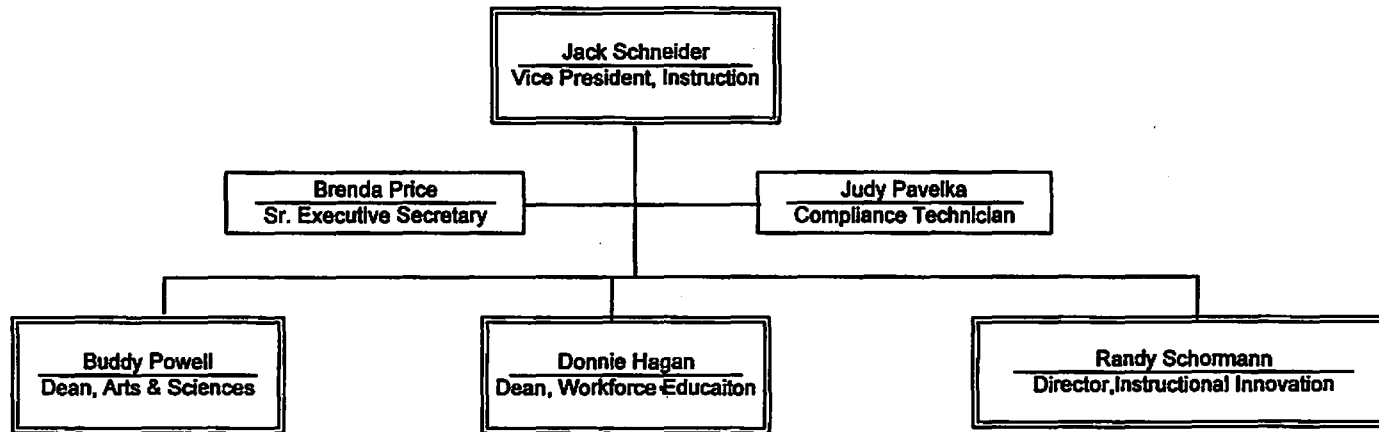
The College has a standardized software platform, Blackboard, for delivering online instruction. All faculty have access to this application and are required to complete a comprehensive course on how to effectively use it. All faculty have desktop computers with Internet connectivity available via campus servers. The College maintains a dedicated server for all distance education courses. This server is protected via routine maintenance and backup procedures.

The College evaluates the facilities and equipment used in distance education programs through a course information form that is included as a part of the course evaluation instrument. A copy of this form and the most recent results are shown in Appendix 3. Student satisfaction surveys, faculty/staff surveys, and other assessment methods are also used to assess facilities and equipment used in distance education programs.

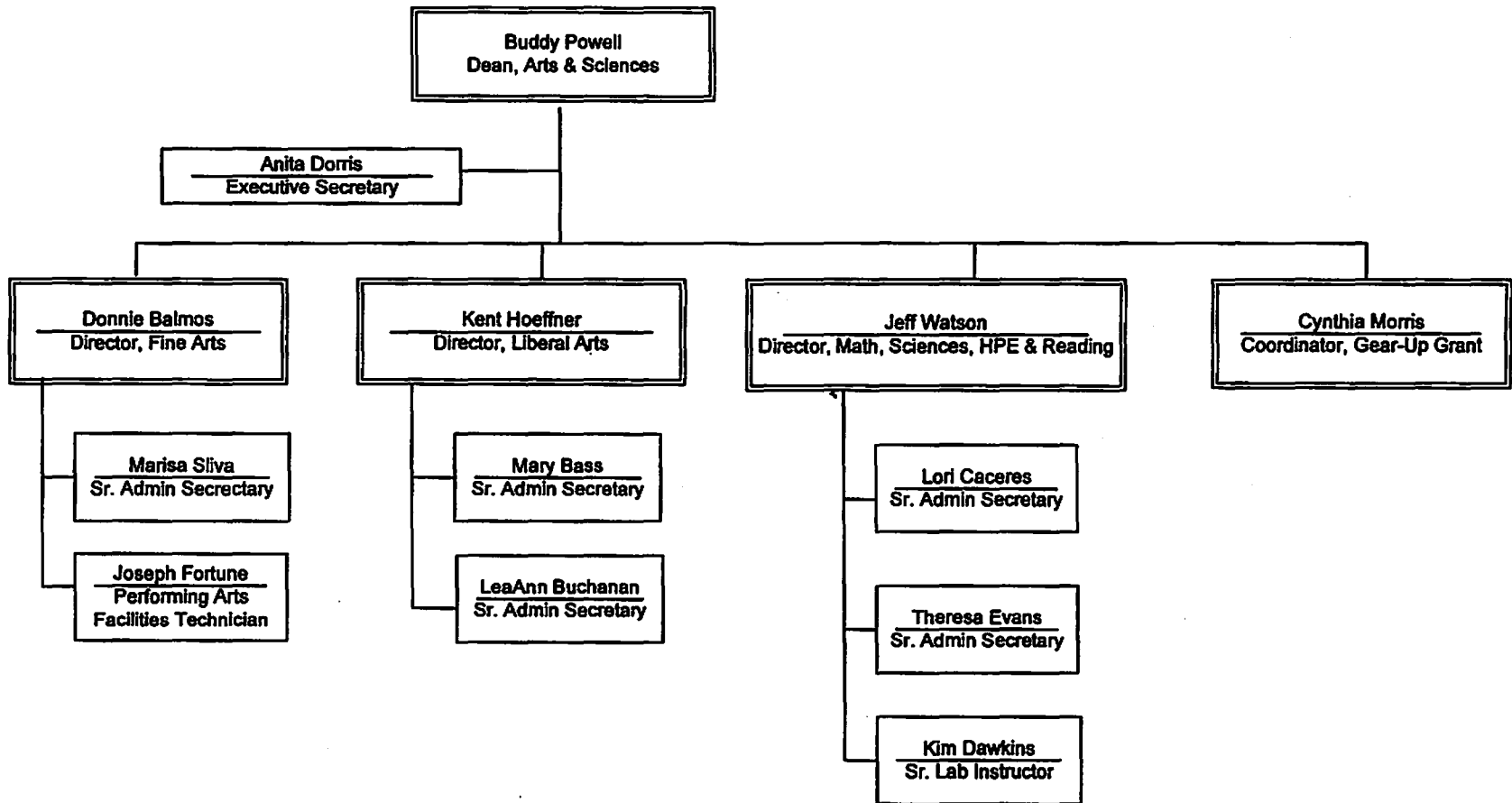
- 2. Arrangements have been made for off-campus delivery of required laboratories, clinical placement sites, workshops, seminars, etc. associated with distance learning activities. Please describe.**

For its two-way interactive video courses, the College is responsible for maintaining fully equipped telecommunications labs. The specific responsibilities are described in Appendix 6, Policy B-XVII, Section D-3.

Instruction Division Organization Chart



Arts and Sciences Organization Chart



Workforce Education Organization Chart

