

INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT AND COMMITMENT

The change the College is requesting does not alter its goals or objectives but does broaden its definition of “community” to include no real boundaries. It also challenges the College to broaden student offerings, resources, and support services.

There have been many factors contributing to the growth of online classes. Online courses and certificate/degree programs are developing naturally from student need and faculty desire. All online course development has been accomplished by faculty on a voluntary basis and who may be paid a stipend by the College through internal mini-grant funding. The College has provided for the faculty an instructional technology specialist, a graphic technician, a faculty Teaching and Learning Center, and the Office of Instructional Innovation and Faculty Development that serves all faculty—both full-time and adjunct.

Facilities and Budget

Just as development of online courses is embedded within the academic departments so are the budgets. The online courses or initiatives are not delineated separately but are funded as a whole within the academic departments. All academic and support programs are funded based on need, outcomes, and economic feasibility and will be evaluated in accordance with the College program review process.

Even though the online programs and courses are within academic departments, the College also supports online courses by budgeting adequate computer services, personnel, facilities, and equipment.

Student computer labs are numerous with more becoming available during the spring semester 2004 with the opening of the new Information Technologies Addition. Through the use of the Blackboard Course Management System students can participate in discussion forums, group discussions, and assessment and evaluation activities. An overview of the College’s technical and physical plant facilities include:

- High-speed (OC-3) connection to the Illinois Century Network and the Internet, one of the fastest connections of any community college.
- Internal fiber and copper cable plant and network switching with more than 256Gbps backbone capacity.
- Fiber between campuses operating at OC-3 (155Mbps) and GbE (1000Mbps) rates for data communications.
- More than 40 computer labs with over 1,800 computers for students to use.

- 5.5 Blackboard Course Management System.
- Citrix Metaframe Farm supporting a virtual lab environment via the Internet.
- PeopleSoft College Data Management System.
- Full-time Webmaster.
- Help Desk for technical support.
- Online library services, including a virtual reference desk service.
- Instructional Technology Services including graphic design and animation, photography, and videography.

The College's budget provides for adequate updating of the technologies employed through its life-cycle plan in Technology Plan III. Although state budget cuts have lengthened the life cycle, the College continues to maintain a three-four year replacement plan.

Reliability/Security/Integrity

The College not only provides the technology for online programs and courses, but it also has established provisions, procedures, and policies for reliability, privacy, safety, and security. Students must register for an online course through the College's usual application and registration process. All online courses use the Blackboard Course Management System that is a password protected site. Faculty load the students into their online course and inform them of the log-in process. The same course outcomes and grading are required for online courses as for traditional courses. Passwords for online testing, proctored exams, honesty statements, and timed tests are all methods used for student security in testing. Turnitin.com is used for student research papers to help prevent plagiarism at the College.

In addition, to assure compliance with copyright laws, Process Management Team #30 has recently prepared a booklet, "Copyright Basics Booklet" that serves as a resource for all faculty to comply with the law. Additional resources and services are being developed in the form of a teacher's toolkit, an Ad Hoc Copyright Committee, and a helpline for questions. These copyright guidelines are also found in the *Full-time Faculty Handbook* on pages 8-9 and in the *Adjunct Faculty Handbook* on page 9. All faculty receive an appropriate faculty handbook every year during the week before classes begin fall semester. New faculty receive the appropriate handbook when they begin to teach for the first time.

Process Management Team #37 has completed a working draft “To Improve the Quality of Web-Delivered and Web-Supported Education Through Faculty Training and Development” which will help faculty and Associate Deans in reviewing online courses for assuring quality.

Course/Program Development Process

Development of all online courses has been by student demand and/or faculty and department interest. Academic Departments in consultation with the Vice President of Academic Affairs have developed online courses based on community needs and student requests or needs. The College has used the Illinois Community College Online (ILLCO) course sharing mechanism to “test” the student need first. Also, the Vice President for Academic Affairs Advisory Committee works to prioritize and plan for future academic projects including developing online courses and support services and makes recommendations. Many College committees guide and help to plan the Strategic Initiatives and Action Plans to meet the “*Blueprint for the Future*”.

The development of several recent online programs grew out of a need based on advisory committee input, faculty interest and insight, and academic department knowledge of the community. For example, the ICC **Web Designer Certificate** program was initially conceived by faculty member Mark DuBois. He worked in business and industry for over twenty-five years before arriving at ICC as an Assistant Professor. Mark assembled a Web Technologies Advisory committee consisting of various members from consulting firms and local businesses and industries. Mark also coordinated these efforts with the World Organization of Webmasters as they were developing a similar curriculum with the University of Washington. Based on feedback received, both locally and nationally, Mark developed the program by preparing syllabi and teaching materials, and selecting textbooks.

After receiving Department Chair and Dean approval, the program was presented to the ICC Curriculum Committee where it received approval. It was then submitted to the Illinois Community College Board where it also was approved. Web Designer classes have been taught in the traditional classroom since 2000. In 2001, with additional input from the Web Technologies Advisory Committee, Mark developed online versions of the classes for the certificate program. Since that time, he has also modified the online classes to include a number of enhancements using Ms-Producer, Camtasia, and a CITRIX metaframe to allow students access to appropriate software via a virtual computer lab.

Throughout this process, Mark initiated the ideas based on his vast industry experience. He has worked with Internet technologies since 1984 and with web technologies since 1992—fewer than 500 people in the world can claim that. Once the ideas were solidified, Mark then worked with the local Web Technologies

Advisory Board and the World Organization of Webmasters chairman to validate the proposals.

ICC has offered an **Industrial and Business Security Certificate** taught in a traditional program since before 1994 under the direction of faculty member, John Wyant. The necessary sequence of approvals was secured through the required procedure of Department Chair, Dean, ICC Curriculum Committee, and then Illinois Community College Board for this program to be offered. Recently, one of our community partners, Caterpillar, Inc. approached the College about offering the courses that make up the certificate online to benefit their employees. Caterpillar is a major employer of security personnel in the area served by the College. Administrative approval for this online certificate development was sought. A meeting with Caterpillar Security personnel and others in an Ad Hoc Advisory committee helped to revise the certificate program to develop the current online/hybrid program that was presented to and approved by the Curriculum Committee in fall 2002. The Industrial and Business Security Certificate is now an integral part of Caterpillar University and enrollment in security courses has increased for the first time since 1994.

Another example of online course/program development is the **Medical Laboratory Technician Associate Degree Program (MLT)**, offered since 1970. As a result of the 2000 Program Review process, Advisory Committee input, faculty desire, and Health Careers and Public Services Department strategic planning initiatives, it was pursued offering a hybrid online MLT Program. This would decrease on-campus class time and hopefully increase student enrollment by increasing the geographic area base and allow the use of clinical sites nearer the students' homes. An online curriculum was developed during the 2001-2002 and 2002-2003 academic years collaboratively with three other community colleges in Illinois. This development was partially funded through Illinois Community College Online (ILCCO) grants. The complete didactic hybrid online CLT/MLT (Clinical Lab Technician/Medical Lab Technician) curriculum was completed in Spring 2003.

As shown in the above examples, online offered programs and courses are integrally related with the mainstream academic structure. Many online courses began as classes with traditional delivery methods. In syllabi the College makes no distinction as to delivery format; the same syllabus is for both online and traditional methods. The ICC transcript does not indicate the delivery format of a class. The College's articulation issues are also the same for all classes regardless of delivery mode. The Records Office assumes that the policies for determining applicability of transfer credit is consistent throughout all academic departments for all classes. General Education requirements that are articulated in the Records Office are handled in a consistent manner using the Illinois Articulation Initiative website.

Course Management

The College considered a course management system in 1998 through a Technology Planning Committee that consisted of faculty, administration, and staff. The Blackboard Course Management System was selected and has been utilized at the College since its introduction and was upgraded in 2001-2002. The College uses Microsoft Office campus-wide based on decisions made at the administrative level with input from the Technology Planning Committee. Basic Web site support is provided on Microsoft and other platforms as needed by the faculty. Virtual programming lab technology is available on Microsoft, Citrix, and Linux platforms. Additional software media programs may be utilized within an online course site as selected by the individual faculty member, as in the case within the Web Designer Certificate Program. In each situation when new technology is incorporated, the faculty member meet with the appropriate staff. This is a collaborative effort to develop solutions that meet instructional goals and are compatible and supportable within ICC's technology and service structure.

When new software or systems are adopted, a beta test and faculty training is scheduled the semester prior to the upgrade while the current version is still in place. Currently, ICC is considering an upgrade to Blackboard 6.0. With a decision made, the College will plan training in the new version during spring 2004 with a release on the system in summer of 2004. If smaller-scale programs or processes are released or changed, the College will, at minimum, offer information to all instructors and students regarding the change and, if necessary, provide appropriate online or face-to-face instruction.

Students or faculty are not required to learn another software program or set of technical procedures when proceeding from one course or program to another. The reason is that all courses at the College utilize the Blackboard Course Management System as the entry portal. Students use one User ID to login to ICC online services, student Email, Blackboard, and the library research databases, e-journals, and e-books. Each online instructor selects the features of the course management system to use. Faculty may also include customized Web-based content. Student orientation and instructional materials for technical procedures are delivered via an online Blackboard Orientation course site as well as tip sheets and frequently asked questions (FAQ's) linked to the ICC Website.

Once in a Blackboard course site, students may be directed to go to faculty web pages and other links that require additional knowledge of software specific to the course or program. These directions are supplied by the respective faculty, such as in the case of the Web Designer Certificate Program. For instance, some courses take advantage of a virtual lab application with specialized software needs for the particular learning objectives of the course. Other courses require specific operating system applications, such as Linux/Unix, or database systems, such as Oracle or SQL Server, with dramatically different user interfaces. Though the technology taught as subject

matter frequently dictates different interfaces for access, areas working with more generalized classes that do not focus on specific technology, such as language or social science courses, afford the faculty the ability to use standard interfaces and technology to simplify the student's access.

The College's PeopleSoft system provides course administration, enrollment, and other services to the College with ties to other key technology service systems, such as automated generation of the network, email, directories, and Blackboard accounts for students. Outsourcing e-cashiering operations with ties to the PeopleSoft system will soon afford students more diverse opportunities for online tuition payment and financing.

Student Cost

The College does not charge students a technology fee. Students find the costs reasonable with Illinois Central College's tuition of \$56/credit hour for all classes, both ones taught traditionally and online. A three-four year life cycle plan for technology updates is maintained as part of the College's operational budget. The College also has issued technology bonds in years when the operational budget could not adequately support the technology needs for the school. Currently, the College is issuing \$4.5M in bonds for needed capital, construction, and technological advancements.

Federal Requirements

The College has an awareness of and a desire to fulfill the legal and regulatory requirements of the jurisdictions in which it operates as documented in the ICC 2002 Higher Learning Commission Self-Study document. As evidenced in the Higher Learning Commission visit report of April 2002, Illinois Central College demonstrates compliance with federal and state guidelines required of an institution of higher education. Illinois Central College recognizes and accepts the requirements placed on institutions of higher education in the United States Department of Education. Data presented on page 143 of the 2002 Self Study demonstrate the College's compliance with those federal requirements. In addition, the College has a college-wide Sexual Harassment Prevention Training Program online this year to reach all employees and students.

Illinois Community Colleges Online (ILCCO)

Illinois Community Colleges Online is a statewide online degree and certificate program initiative to expand access to learning opportunities for all residents of Illinois independent of location and/or time. ILCCO's purpose is to provide a wide range of online learning opportunities to Illinois residents at a reasonable cost and allow students at any community college to access, through their home college, online courses and programs delivered from other Illinois community colleges. ILCCO is

developing the policies and procedures needed for community colleges to deliver common programs and degrees statewide by coordinating a unique statewide course sharing process called ICE, Internet Course Exchange.

Without using ILCCO, if students wish to complete degrees, certificates, or courses of study solely via the Internet, and ICC does not offer sufficient courses in that format, students would need to (1) matriculate at each community college from which courses will be taken, (2) register for and complete course work at all schools, and (3) request transcripts be sent to and evaluated by the degree-granting institution—a complex and time-consuming process. ILCCO helps to eliminate the need for students to register at multiple institutions.

Some benefits of offering online degrees/certificates are that ILCCO:

- As determined by the home college, allows students to enroll through their home colleges for courses and programs taught by another college.
- As determined by the home college, allows students to use courses from other colleges to meet degree and program requirements at their home college.
- Allows for sharing of high demand degree/certificate programs that would be costly and difficult for many colleges to develop and deliver on their own.
- Increases the educational opportunities for students in Illinois.
- Avoids losing online students to competitors in other states.
- Promotes community college collaboration rather than isolation.

Illinois Central College has used ILCCO to “test” the success of offering an online course by importing from another community college three to eight seats in an online course that the faculty may be considering for development. This not only has helped ICC to determine the need for such a course, but it has also “encouraged” the College’s faculty to develop the online course offering. This is how most recently, the College has developed and offered the ECON 110 and ECON 111 courses online.

Currently, ICC is only importing an online course if requested by a student or academic department to fulfill a specific need not offered at the College. For Fall Semester 2003, no courses were imported. However, ICC does export online courses to other community colleges and has for the past several semesters. For Summer 2003, the College exported 20 seats in six online classes. For Fall Semester 2003, the College is exporting approximately 15-22 seats in four online classes.