



## Periodic Report on Distance Education

California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office  
*Jack Scott, Chancellor*

Prepared by the Academic Affairs Division  
and the Office of Communications

*September 1, 2009*



*"Empowering Community Colleges through  
Leadership, Advocacy, and Support"*



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September 1, 2009

Board of Governors  
California Community Colleges  
1102 Q Street  
Sacramento, CA 95811-6549

Dear Board of Governors,

I am pleased to present to you the Chancellor's Office *Periodic Report on Distance Education*. This report covers the time period from July 1, 2006 through June 30, 2008.

Distance education is designed to improve access to higher education and offer students a viable alternative for completing their educational goals. These programs continue to grow within the community college system.

This report provides you an update on the status of distance education in the California Community Colleges and sheds light about the types of students who access and complete our many distance education programs.

Again, it is my pleasure to provide you this information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jack Scott". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Jack Scott  
Chancellor



# Introduction

The California Community Colleges serve more than 2.9 million students and is the largest system of higher education in the nation. To address the educational needs of this diverse student body the community colleges are offering more courses through distance education.

Distance education is a field of education that focuses on the pedagogy, technology and instructional systems design that aim to deliver education to students who are not physically present in the same location with the instructor. Distance education is the process of creating an educational experience of equal qualitative value for the learner to best suit his or her needs outside the classroom.

Title 5, section 55200, defines distance education (DE) as “instruction in which the instructor and student are separated by distance and interact through the assistance of communication technology.” Distance education courses that require a physical on-site presence for any reason, including the taking of examinations, is considered to be a hybrid or blended course of study which is becoming widely used in colleges and universities around the globe.

The first distance education report by the Chancellor’s Office was issued in August 2001. This report recognized the extent to which distance education was offered within the community colleges and covered the five-year period of 1995-2000. Every two years, this report is updated to include data from the prior two fiscal years. The most recent report submitted to the board of governors covered the development of DE through 2006 and was submitted to the board in July 2007.

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This report sheds light on DE enrollment and completion rates for fiscal years 2006/07 and 2007/08. It also provides demographic data pertaining to the age, ethnicity, gender and disabilities of students enrolled in DE courses. Data included in this report are derived from the Chancellor's Office Management Information System (COMIS).

# Background

For 15 years prior to 1994, the California Community Colleges provided students DE opportunities limited to courses transferable to baccalaureate institutions. In 1994, new regulations allowed the community colleges to explore and develop educational initiatives using advanced communication and computing technologies to address student access issues related to geographical, cultural, or facility barriers. The board of governors also established a distance education technical advisory committee to evaluate the status of DE in the system.

A report on DE presented to the board in August 2001 focused on issues that were needed to support DE throughout the community colleges. The 2001 report also included information about student access, enrollment, course completion, and student and faculty satisfaction with this instructional delivery mode.

In 2002 the board of governors approved title 5 regulations for expansion of DE to non-transferable credit and noncredit independent study courses. The board also directed

## Definitions

Since all data are derived from the COMIS, this report contains data reported by Data Element Dictionary (DED) codes. For purposes of this report a distinction needs to be made between a course, course section, and course session. The DED definitions are as follows:

- A **course** is a unique offering by a college, which has a unique course outline that has been approved by a local college's curriculum committee (e.g., Bio. 1: Principles of Biology).
- A **course section** is an individual course offering at the local college (e.g., Bio. 1-04, which would denote the fourth section of Bio. 1 being offered in a particular term).
- A **course session** represents a unique instructional occurrence within a course section. There are two types of course sessions identified in the DED. Type "A" is the standard type of course session. Type "C" is a course session that is used to assign students from the primary course section to smaller class sizes (e.g., to schedule two or more laboratory course sessions for students in the same Bio. 1 lecture section, the college may offer two sections, Bio 1-04A and Bio 1-04B to allow for smaller laboratory class sizes for students from the same biology lecture course).

In this report, a course session is roughly equivalent to a course section because a course session captures all student enrollments and presents a more precise count of course offerings throughout the system.

continuance of the review and collection of DE data that began in 1994. These data, updated every two years, report student access and success in all DE courses by the age, ethnicity, gender and type of disability of the students enrolled.

The 2002 regulatory changes also allow DE courses to be considered as equivalent to a regular course rather than solely as independent study for the purposes of computing full-time equivalent student (FTES) apportionment.

Regulations regarding the standards and criteria for DE courses were revised in collaboration with the Educational Technology Advisory Committee and Chancellor's Office staff and approved by the board of governors in July 2007. Regulations regarding DE attendance accounting standards were also revised and approved by the board in June 2008.

Throughout the system, DE continues to grow to include more course sessions, more students and more services.

### Definitions (continued)

- **Synchronous Communication** is direct communication, where all parties involved in the communication are present at the same time (an event). Examples include a telephone conversation, a company board meeting, a chat room event, and instant messaging.
- **Asynchronous Communication** does not require that all parties involved in the communication need to be present and available at the same time. Examples of this include email (the receiver does not have to be logged on when the sender sends the email message), discussion boards, which allow conversations to evolve and communities to develop over a period of time, and text messaging over cell phones.



## Key Findings

### DE: Student Access to Instruction, 2006 through 2008

Examination of the number of DE courses offered during the report period reveals growth in student access to DE instruction. In 2006/2007 colleges offered 26,134 DE sessions, representing 4.83 percent of total traditional education sessions offered in that year. In 2007/2008, DE sessions increased slightly to represent 5.64 percent of traditional education sessions offered.

Table 1 compares the number of DE and traditional course sessions offered and the percentage of the total course sessions for the two-year period. The number of sessions included for noncredit courses is not significant. In 2006/2007 there were 13 noncredit course sessions offered via DE and 37 sessions in 2007/2008.

**Table 1**  
**Comparison of Distance Education and Traditional Sessions**  
**2006-08**

Fiscal Year	Distance Education Sessions	Traditional Education Sessions	Total Sessions Offered	Percent of DE Overall
2006/07	26,134	514,938	541,072	4.83%
2007/08	32,417	542,406	574,823	5.64%

### DE: Delivery Methods, 2006 through 2008

There are 10 types of DE courses by delivery method defined in the COMIS Data Element Dictionary (DED). Table 2 shows the number of DE course sessions by delivery method.

**Table 2**  
**Number of Distance Education Course Sessions by Delivery Method**  
**2006-08**

Data Element	Description from Data Element Dictionary	Fiscal Year	
		06/07	07/08
#50	<b>Asynchronous:</b> (e.g. various types of instructional software, computer assisted instruction (CAI); digitized visual, audio or text selected in response to student input; or specially structured audio tapes, web enhanced television, etc.)	809	1,797
#51	<b>Televised Synchronous:</b> Two-way interactive video and audio (e.g. videoconference)	398	565
#52	<b>Televised Synchronous:</b> One-way interactive video and two-way interactive audio	185	194
#54	<b>Synchronous:</b> Other simultaneous interactive medium	167	191
#61	<b>Asynchronous:</b> Text one-way (e.g. newspaper, correspondence, web page, etc.)	908	1,054
#62	<b>Asynchronous:</b> Audio one-way (e.g. audio cassette, radio, etc.)	13	8
#63	<b>Televised Asynchronous:</b> Video one-way (e.g. ITV, video cassette, etc.)	2,137	1,705
#64	<b>Asynchronous:</b> Other one-way passive medium	166	273
#71	<b>Internet Synchronous:</b> Session under supervision of instructor not available by line of sight using the Internet with immediate opportunity for exchange between participants.	1,917	2,178
#72	<b>Internet Asynchronous:</b> Session under supervision of instructor not available by line of sight using the Internet without the immediate involvement of the instructor.	19,434	24,449

Internet-based instructional delivery (codes 61, 71, and 72) has out-paced televised instruction (codes 51, 52, and 63) as the predominant delivery mode for DE in the community colleges. Televised instruction accounted for 2,720 course sessions in 2006/07 and for 2,464 course sessions in 2007/08. The total number of DE course sessions delivered entirely or predominately (i.e., more than 51 percent) over the Internet rose from 22,259 in 2006/07 to 25,511 in 2007/08.

Asynchronous Internet-based instructional delivery (code 72) now accounts for 24,449 DE course sessions, followed by synchronous Internet-based instruction (code 71) with 2,178. Other technologies used throughout the community colleges to deliver instruction include correspondence, audiocassette, radio and other media not specified.

### DE: Enrollment and Completion Rates, 2006 through 2008

For the purposes of this report, “total student headcount” represents the total number of students that enrolled in at least one distance education course and “unduplicated headcount” means that a student is only counted one time when enrolling in one or more distance education courses.

#### Enrollment and Completion Rates: By headcount

Table 3 shows the growth in student headcount over the two-year report period. In the previous report, it was reported that 11.8 percent of students enrolled in courses were enrolled in DE course sessions.

The total student headcount in DE courses grew from 392,355 in 2006/07 to 483,884 in 2007/08, an increase of 2.9 percent. The growth in the number of DE courses reflects the development of Internet-based courses in the past several academic years.

**Table 3**  
**Unduplicated Student Headcount in All Distance Education and Traditional Education Course Sessions, 2006–08**

Fiscal Year	Distance Education	Traditional Education	Total Sessions	Percent of Total Headcount
2006/07	392,355	2,694,149	3,086,504	14.56%
2007/08	483,884	2,810,572	3,294,456	17.22%

**Enrollment and Completion Rates: Noticeable trends**

Table 4 displays an analysis of trends in the number of students enrolled in DE course sessions in comparison to students enrolled in traditional sessions. In the two-year period, enrollment growth in traditional education sessions was 3.26 percent in comparison to 17.57 percent growth in distance education sessions.

<b>Table 4 Unduplicated Student Headcount Trends in Distance Education and Traditional Education Course Sessions, 2006-08</b>						
Fiscal Year	Distance Education			Traditional		
	Head count	Annual Variance (+ or -)	Percent Change	Head count	Annual Variance (+ or -)	Percent Change
2005-06	328,372			2,630,207		
2006-07	392,355	63,983	16.31%	2,694,149	63,942	2.37%
2007-08	483,384	91,029	18.83%	2,810,572	116,423	4.14%
Average Percent Change			17.57%			3.26%

Table 5 displays the comparison of success rates between DE students and traditional education students in credit courses during the two-year period. The number of students in Table 5 is a total student headcount including performance in multiple course sessions with a grade of “C” or better. Students receiving a grade of “D” or lower were not counted as successful completions. The distance education success rate rose slightly in 2007/08, from 53 percent to 54 percent. This success rate compares to 65 percent for traditional education students in the same period.

<b>Table 5 Comparison of Student Success Rates in Distance Education and Traditional Education Course Sessions (Total Student Headcount), 2006–08</b>				
Student Outcome	2006/07		2007/08	
	Distance Education	Traditional Education	Distance Education	Traditional Education
Completed	392,145	5,469,554	500,142	5,725,712
Not Completed	346,551	2,963,846	425,762	3,023,945
Total	738,696	8,433,400	925,904	8,749,657
Success Rate	53 %	65%	54%	65%

**Enrollment and Completion Rates: By credit course session and age**

Table 6 compares student success rates by age in DE credit course sessions. The age categories are: less than 18 years old; 18–19 years old; 20–24, 25–29, 30–34, 35–39, 40–49, and 50 and older. Data is also shown for students who declined to report their ages.

There were slight increases in success rates of students in the four age categories between 20 and 39 years and also in the 50 years and older group. Student success is gradually improving for students over 25.

**Enrollment and Completion Rates: By ethnicity**

Table 7 compares success rates by ethnicity. In the two-year period, there were slight improvements in success for some ethnic groups: Filipino, Hispanic and Native American students. There were also improvements for students who identified themselves as “other” and those who declined to state their ethnicity.

**Table 6**  
**Student Success Rates by Age in Distance Education Credit**  
**Course Sessions (Total Student Headcount), 2006-08**

Age	Student Outcome	2006/07	2007/08
<18	Completed	9,571	12,126
	Not Completed	6,647	8,324
	Total	16,218	20,450
	Rate of completion	59 percent	59 percent
18-19	Completed	57,903	75,824
	Not Completed	61,280	77,670
	Total	119,183	153,494
	Rate of completion	49 percent	49 percent
20-24	Completed	130,155	164,851
	Not Completed	134,268	163,056
	Total	264,423	327,907
	Rate of completion	49 percent	50 percent
25-29	Completed	63,059	83,021
	Not Completed	54,930	69,133
	Total	117,989	152,154
	Rate of completion	53 percent	55 percent
30-34	Completed	39,818	50,829
	Not Completed	29,626	36,688
	Total	69,444	87,517
	Rate of completion	57 percent	58 percent
35-39	Completed	30,199	38,702
	Not Completed	20,856	25,224
	Total	51,055	63,926
	Rate of completion	59 percent	61 percent
40-49	Completed	42,399	51,021
	Not Completed	26,386	30,626
	Total	68,785	81,647
	Rate of completion	62 percent	62 percent
50+	Completed	18,988	23,716
	Not Completed	12,505	15,003
	Total	31,493	38,719
	Rate of completion	60 percent	61 percent
Unknown	Completed	49	51
	Not Completed	42	36
	Total	91	87
	Rate of completion	54 percent	59 percent

**Table 7**  
**Student Success Rate by Ethnicity in Distance Education Credit**  
**Course Sessions (Total Student Headcount), 2006–08**

Ethnicity	Student Outcome	2006/07	2007/08
Asian/ Pacific Islander	Completed	52,311	65,326
	Not Completed	36,327	45,871
	Total	88,638	111,197
	Rate of completion	59 percent	59 percent
Black	Completed	25,400	32,703
	Not Completed	38,412	48,891
	Total	63,812	81,594
	Rate of completion	40 percent	40 percent
Filipino	Completed	13,114	17,970
	Not Completed	12,171	15,760
	Total	25,285	33,730
	Rate of completion	52 percent	53 percent
Hispanic	Completed	69,043	92,843
	Not Completed	80,163	102,662
	Total	149,206	195,505
	Rate of completion	46 percent	47 percent
Native American	Completed	4,414	5,347
	Not Completed	4,905	5,697
	Total	9,319	11,044
	Rate of completion	47 percent	48 percent
Other	Completed	7,537	9,022
	Not Completed	7,141	8,407
	Total	14,678	17,429
	Rate of completion	51 percent	52 percent
Unknown/Declined to State	Completed	32,547	43,805
	Not Completed	27,428	36,186
	Total	59,975	79,991
	Rate of completion	54 percent	55 percent
White	Completed	185,598	225,268
	Not Completed	142,185	170,146
	Total	327,783	395,414
	Rate of completion	57 percent	57 percent

### Enrollment and Completion Rates: By gender

Table 8 compares success rates by gender. There is only slight improvement (1 percent) in the success rates of female students over the two-year period. There was no change in success rates for male students or for those who declined to identify their gender.

<b>Table 8 Student Success Rate by Gender in Distance Education Credit Course Sessions (Total Student Headcount), 2006–08</b>			
Gender	Student Outcome	2006/07	2007/08
Male	Completed	244,575	305,512
	Not Completed	214,495	264,494
	Total	459,070	570,006
	Rate of completion	53 percent	54 percent
Female	Completed	143,009	183,338
	Not Completed	132,349	166,402
	Total	275,358	349,740
	Rate of completion	52 percent	52 percent
Unknown	Completed	2,380	3,434
	Not Completed	1,888	2,724
	Total	4,268	6,158
	Rate of completion	56 percent	56 percent

### Enrollment and Completion Rates: By disability

There are nine categories of disabilities that are recorded in COMIS data: acquired brain injury, developmentally delayed learner, hearing impaired, learning disabled, mobility impaired, other disability, psychological disability, speech/language impaired and visually impaired.

Table 9 compares success rates of disabled students in DE course sessions. There was improvement in success rates for students with acquired brain injury (+4 percent) as well as for developmentally delayed learners (+4 percent) over the two-year period. There was a slight decline in rates for students who are mobility impaired (-1 percent). There was a significant decline in success rates for students who are visually impaired (-3 percent), which signals a need for the colleges to provide accommodations such as speech recognition, audio content and other adaptive learning tools.



**Table 9**  
**Student Success Rate by Type of Disability in Distance Education**  
**Credit Course Sessions (Total Student Headcount), 2006–08**

Disability	Student Outcome	2006/07	2007/08
Acquired brain injury	Completed	262	305
	Not Completed	306	301
	Total	568	606
	Rate of completion	46%	50%
Developmentally delayed learner	Completed	159	203
	Not Completed	211	230
	Total	370	433
	Rate of completion	43%	47%
Hearing impaired	Completed	408	443
	Not Completed	387	420
	Total	795	863
	Rate of completion	51%	51%
Learning disabled	Completed	2,626	3,083
	Not Completed	2,739	3,223
	Total	5,365	6,306
	Rate of completion	49%	49%
Mobility impaired	Completed	1,597	1,691
	Not Completed	1,481	1,638
	Total	3,078	3,329
	Rate of completion	52%	51%
Other disability	Completed	2,542	3,301
	Not Completed	2,785	3,406
	Total	5,327	6,707
	Rate of completion	48%	49%
Psychological disability	Completed	1,467	1,772
	Not Completed	1,706	2,012
	Total	3,173	3,784
	Rate of completion	46%	47%
Speech/language impaired	Completed	41	66
	Not Completed	50	76
	Total	91	142
	Rate of completion	45%	46%
Visually Impaired	Completed	267	319
	Not Completed	256	343
	Total	523	662
	Rate of completion	51%	48%

## **DE: California Community Colleges' Partnerships and Agreements**

### **Incarcerated Students**

With an inmate population of more than 165,000 and the annual release of roughly 140,000 parolees, California maintains the largest concentration of people under the control of a criminal justice system in the world. Inmates reentering society face a wide range of challenges, from securing employment and housing to treating substance abuse and mental and physical illnesses to reconnecting with their families and communities. California Community Colleges are dealing with these complex issues by creating partnerships between correctional institutions and colleges. Over the years, many districts have forged cooperative agreements to offer academic and vocational programs to incarcerated students and parolees. Most incarcerated students enroll in college classes through distance education programs, mainly in telecourses, correspondence and hybridized classes.

### **@ONE Project**

This partnership between California Community Colleges and @ONE is a multi-layered project allowing the Chancellor's Office to replace the current listserv (DE COORD-All) being used by DE coordinators from each college. Using new technology DE has been made more efficient.

### **California Virtual Campus**

The California Virtual Campus (CVC) catalog of distance education programs and courses continues the work of its predecessor—the California Virtual University website—in making information available about distance education opportunities at California institutions of higher education.

### **Educational Technology Advisory Committee**

The Educational Technology Advisory Committee (ETAC) advises the Chancellor's Office on the vision, policy and planning in support of distance education and educational technology. The primary goal of ETAC is to advise the Chancellor's Office regarding the improvement of student access and success through the use of advanced communication and educational technologies.

## Conclusion

This report provides an update on distance education offered by the California Community Colleges and includes the two-year period of 2006/2007 through 2007/08. Distance education continues to grow in the system and offers students a viable alternative for completing their educational goals. The next Chancellor's Office periodic report on distance education is scheduled to be published in 2011.



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