Online Education at UC Davis

UC Davis offers online and hybrid courses through UC Online Education, UC Davis Extension, and individual departments and faculty. Every online and hybrid course depends on extensive partnerships between on campus groups and community organizations. These partnerships typically combine technological, pedagogical, and subject-area expertise in order to design courses that effectively communicate instructional material and help students achieve learning goals in an online setting.

The UC Davis main campus offers online and hybrid courses that are designed by faculty and individual departments. There are currently 18 approved online courses and 15 more are in the approval process. The Spanish and Classics Department offers 6 online courses, the most of any department. In addition, mathematics, writing, and art courses are offered online, as well as several science courses including nutrition, biology, and agriculture and environment. Some web-based courses provide students with online access to instructors in addition to interactive text, graphics and executable programs.

Due to the increased interest in developing online courses amongst faculty, the Committee on Courses of Instruction has designated two "learning activity" codes used on course approval forms. The suffix "V" designates all web-based courses, "WVL" is used for on-line activities that replace standard lectures, and "WED" for online activities that replace standard discussion sections. These codes are attributed to courses where one or more hours per week of in-class work is replaced with online formats. In addition, the Courses Committee has established midterm and final examination guidelines to ensure that the student taking the examination is the student receiving credit. Policies require the exams to be held in a traditional classroom, at a UC testing center or any testing center offered through the Consortium of College Testing Centers and approved by the National College Testing Association (NCTA).

In the fall of 2011, UC Davis also established the Provost Hybrid Course Award (PHCA). The PHCA is a grant program that provides financial support and consulting services to faculty to create hybrid courses within their departments. The purpose of the award is to promote innovative hybrid courses that combine face-to-face and online instruction and activities so the two learning designs contribute equally to the learning environment. Each year, the PHCA chooses four faculty to support throughout the hybrid course design process. Awardees receive $12,500 each and access to technical assistance through Academic Technology Services (ATS) and the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL).

PHCA awardees are chosen based on their proposal's merits for improving teaching and learning on the UC Davis campus. Proposals must address several review criteria; PHCA awards proposals that directly respond to current faculty or student concerns,

demonstrate the potential to improve instruction for a substantial number of students, address campus-wide initiatives or educational challenges, project strategic and reasonable budgets, and effectively integrate hybrid courses with departmental curricula and budget. The guidelines of PHCA reflect a careful approach to developing online learning; the goal is to promote a strategic transition from classroom to online learning, and to implement hybrid course designs that improve education on campus and resolve barriers to effective learning.

In addition to the main campus, UC Davis Extension provides continuing and professional education courses, many of which are designated online or hybrid courses. Online courses are designed to be self-paced where students complete the course within a certain timeframe or are given set exam dates, or cohorts that begin and end with a group of students working together. To date, 366 academic and 240 nonacademic online courses have been offered. UC Davis Extension has established 13 professional programs that can be completed entirely online, as well as academic, professional and business certificate programs, e-learning modules, degree programs, and online credit-bearing courses. Each program is fostered through partnerships with UC Davis Departments and Colleges, individual faculty, graduate groups, and various community partners. These partnerships help root UC Davis Extension's online education programs within the community.

As interest in online education grows, technology and the corresponding technology support also progress to ensure faculty can efficiently present course material, and that course objectives are met. Faculty utilize various types of learning delivery platforms, including SmartSite, a learning management system, Adobe Connect, a web conferencing system, and Limelight, a video delivery system. In addition, faculty can use iTunes U, YouTube, UCTV and Virtual Computer Lab, each of which provides open access to a selection of UC Davis educational content. Faculty can employ one or a combination of these platforms to deliver online content.

On campus, Information Education Technology (IET-ATS) has been an important resource in the development of online-instruction technology. ATS provides a suite of services and collaborates with campus faculty and UC Davis Extension to support the development and delivery of online education. ATS assists faculty to better understand and utilize the technology currently available. ATS holds workshops and one-on-one consultations, and will even work with faculty to design online courses by guiding them through the process of creating learning activities and assessments, selecting and creating learning content, selecting the appropriate technologies, and collecting data to track learner progress. ATS services help ensure that the technology implemented for online courses successfully guides students towards learning objectives. ATS has also developed new production services that faculty can use more independently to create content for online learning at a lower cost and with fewer ATS human recourses.

Finally, the Center for Excellence in Teaching in Learning (CETL) addresses teaching issues across campus by offering faculty recourses relating to educational standards and online education, consultation services, work-shops, and other events. CETL hosted instructional design consultations and project management services for the UC Davis Online Instruction Pilot Project (OIPP) courses from 2011-2012. CETL also hosted the Online and Hybrid Learning Showcase and Workshops in October of 2012, which featured hands-on training, tips for teaching online courses, and an online and hybrid showcase presented by faculty who successfully taught online courses the prior year.

Interest in developing online education has permeated across campus and disciplines. Online instructional design have strategically developed to maintain UD Davis's teaching and educational standards as courses transition into or are designed as online courses. As evinced by the goals of the Provost Hybrid Course Award and other efforts to develop online education on campus, online teaching activities have revolved around efforts to improve education on campus.