

# Distributed Learning University Circle

Round One  
Submission

Okanagan University College

June 29, 2004

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## **1.0 Introduction**

UBC has instigated multiple methods of gathering input on the vision, values and academic programs for UBC Okanagan. One of those methods is called University Circles. The University Circles provide a forum for a focused engagement of the challenges and opportunities ahead. These circles are small groups of OUC faculty, staff or students that meet regularly and engage in generating ideas and opportunities to provide both vision and value to the transition process. The Distributed Learning University Circle was formed to address some of the unique challenges and opportunities that Distributed Learning brings to the post secondary environment.

## **2.0 Distributed Learning University Circle Purpose**

The use of Distributed Learning (DL) is identified in the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). Section 5 of the MOU lists key linkages to Okanagan College as one of UBC Okanagan's principle mandates. It identifies the expansion of course offerings at OC satellite campuses through the use of online and mixed mode delivery methods.

Teaching excellence is also at the heart of UBC Okanagan's vision, which is to operate a world-class teaching and research intensive university site in Kelowna.

With the MOU and Vision statement clearly in mind, the Distributed Learning team has identified the following primary objectives:

1. To inform the Transition Team as to the relevant issues related to Distributed Learning (DL) and to support the future development of DL at UBC Okanagan.
2. To identify opportunities for collaboration in DL between UBC Okanagan and the new Okanagan College.
3. To provide recommendations that will enhance the development and delivery of DL at UBC Okanagan.
4. To ensure that UBC Okanagan's commitment to teaching excellence includes DL.
5. To align DL new initiatives to the vision and values of UBC Okanagan.

### 3.0 Distributed Learning (DL) University Circle Work Plan

Task	Responsibility	Target Date
<b>1. Initiating</b>		
<b>1.1 University Circle Information meeting</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Introduction to the concept of University Circles as modes of input into the UBC Okanagan transition process.</li> </ul>	Moura Quayle, UBC Okanagan	April 19, 2004
<b>1.2 Distributed Learning University Circle established</b> <p>Project team members include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Charlotte Kushner</li> <li>Peter Arthur</li> <li>Marni Esson</li> <li>Lee Cartier</li> <li>Rob Kjarsgaard</li> </ul>	Rob Kjarsgaard	April 29, 2004
<b>2. Planning</b>		
<b>2.1 DL University Circle Meeting</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>SWOT analysis, brain storming activity, Identifying Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats</li> </ul>	Project team	May 14, 2004
<b>2.2 Draft Report initiated</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Development of draft submission</li> <li>Force Field Analysis</li> <li>Draft list of opportunities</li> </ul>	Rob Kjarsgaard	May 18, 2004
<b>2.3 DL University Circle Meeting</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prioritising activity</li> <li>Establish the following <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Effectiveness</li> <li>Cost of completion</li> <li>Ease of doing</li> <li>Possibility for collaboration</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	Project Team	May 21, 2004
<b>2.4 DL University Circle Meeting</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish round 1 recommendations</li> <li>Establish next steps for round 2</li> <li>Establish project members for round 2</li> </ul>	Project Team	May 28, 2004
<b>3. Executing</b>		
<b>3.1 Report Finalised</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Collaborate on editing final report</li> </ul>	Project Team	June 4, 2004
<b>4. Closing</b>		
<b>4.1 Submit final report</b>	Project Team	June 30, 2004
<b>4.2 Establish date for round 2 meeting</b>	Project Team	July 30, 2004

## 4.0 SWOT Analysis

The DL University Circle engaged in a SWOT analysis to establish a macro picture of the current Distributed Learning situation in Post Secondary Education. Conducting a SWOT analysis can be an effective way of identifying **S**trengths, **W**eaknesses, and examining **O**pportunities and **T**hreats. The objective of the DL University Circle was to use the SWOT analysis to identify the big picture as it relates to the current situation and then analyse the results and use the findings to inform the input process.

### 4.1 SWOT List of Threats

Quality Issues:

- Subject matter experts involved in curriculum development and instructional design without the relevant skills.
- Teachers with subject matter experience but no skill for teaching in DL format.
- Poor quality material in some DL leads to early withdrawals and low completion rates.
- Little consistency and no quality assurance.

Infrastructure Issues:

- Collective agreements can be limiting.
- Lack of funding available for course development.
- Research focus in conflict with teaching focus.
- DL instructors not considered equal to Face to Face instructors.
- Limited local course offerings.
- Increasing competition from other institutions.
- Declining enrollment in the K-12 sector.

Student Issues:

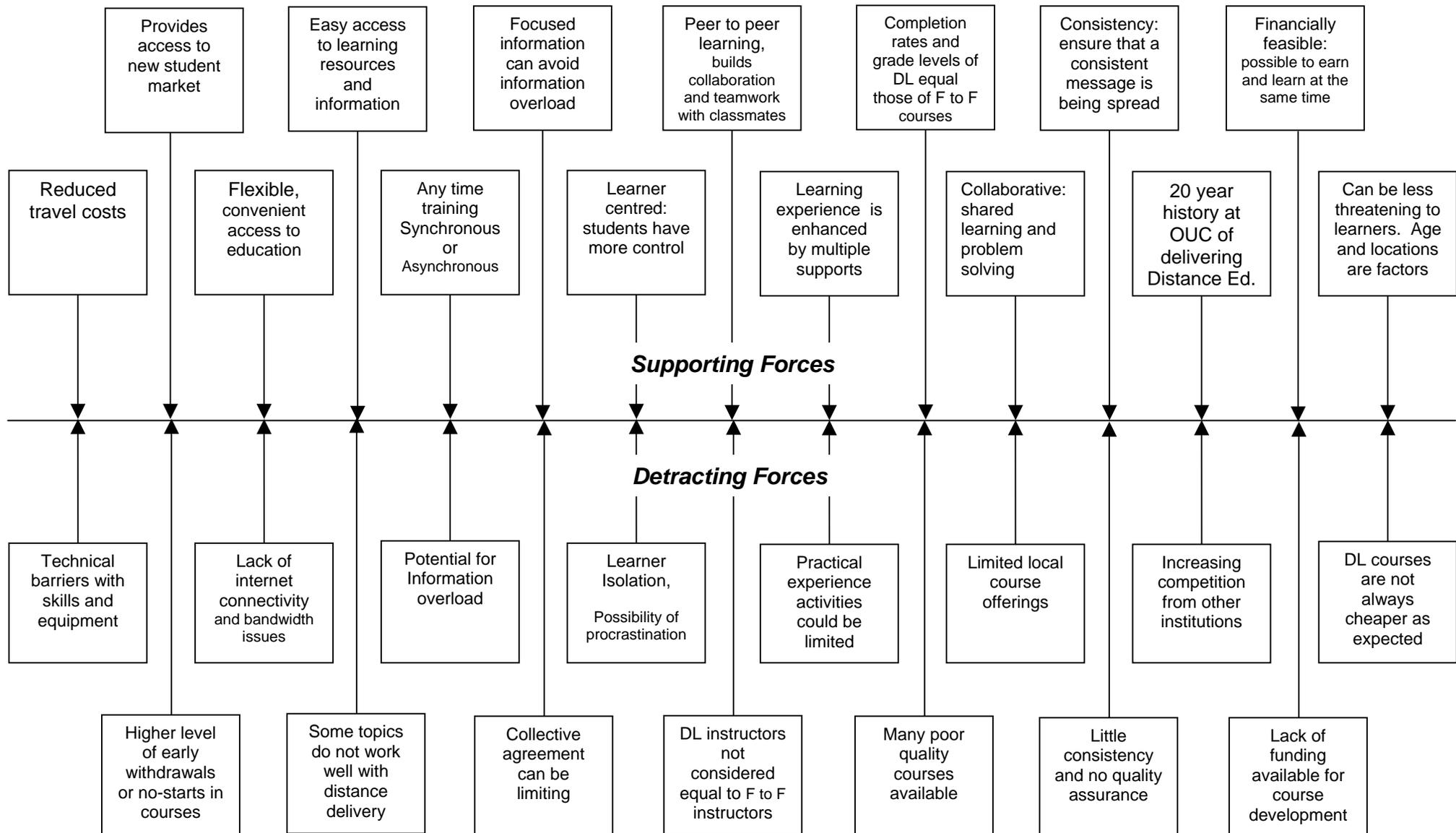
- Technical barriers with skills and equipment.
- Potential for information overload.
- Students' needs not known.
- Instruction that is not relevant to the learner's situation.
- Learner isolation, possibility of procrastination.
- Practical experience activities could be limited.
- DL courses are not always less expensive as expected.

## **4.2 SWOT List of opportunities**

1. Develop standards and guidelines for DL development and delivery
2. Create an Academic Development Centre
3. Establish training in DL delivery skills for instructors
4. Establish a Distributed Learning department
5. Access new student market (mid career professionals etc.) to counter declining enrolment in K-12 sector
6. Enhance access opportunities
7. Make DL educational supports available and accessible for all instruction
8. Collaborate on marketing and development of DL programs (BC Campus Model)
9. Ensure articulation agreements to provide learner flexibility
10. Create DL templates
11. Partner on development of learning object repository
12. Insure financial incentives for teachers to engage in DL
13. Amend collective agreement to make it more DL friendly

## 5.0 Force Field Analysis

Examining the detracting and supporting forces effecting the use of Distributed Learning in post secondary education



## 6.0 Prioritisation table

The DL University Circle examined the opportunities that were identified in the SWOT Analysis and prioritised them individually, ranking each opportunity from 1 to 5 with 5 being the highest priority. The following table shows an aggregate of those findings and establishes the highest priorities of the University Circle.

<b>Opportunity</b>	<b>Priority level</b> Based on aggregate of findings. 25 is highest priority level
Develop standards and guidelines for DL development and delivery	25
Establish training in DL delivery skills for instructors	24
Create an Academic Development Centre	23
Amend collective agreement to make it more DL friendly	22
Insure financial incentives for teachers to engage in DL	20
Make DL educational supports available and accessible for all instruction	19
Create DL templates	19
Access new student market (mid career professionals etc.) to counter declining enrolment in K-12 sector	18
Ensure articulation agreements to provide learner flexibility	17
Enhance Scalability	15
Collaborate on marketing and development of DL programs (BC Campus Model)	15
Establish a Distributed Learning department	14
Partner on development of learning object repository	13

## 7.0 Identified Issues and Opportunities

As a result of the prioritisation process the DL University Circle identified three clusters of interrelated opportunities and issues. They are as follows:

### 7.1 Teaching and learning excellence

The following five opportunities were identified by the University Circle as potential actions that could increase teaching and learning excellence in Distributed Learning.

- Develop standards and guidelines for DL development and delivery
- Create an Academic Development Centre
- Establish training in DL delivery skills for instructors
- Make DL educational supports available and accessible for all instruction
- Create DL templates

In order to ensure consistent quality of online education one of the primary issues that the University Circle identified was the need for the new institutions to develop standards and guidelines for Distance Learning development and delivery. We recommend that a task team be given the role to develop and plan the implementation of new standards and guidelines as OUC is transitioned into two new institutions.

Another priority that was identified was the creation of an academic development centre to support and enhance the quality of distributed learning in the Okanagan. Academic centres typically provide programs for faculty, T.A's, and grad students that promote the improvement of teaching and learning. In the case of online learning it is recognised that instructors require specialised skills to effectively teach online. Part of the role of an academic development centre would be to provide online instructors with professional development opportunities to improve their facilitation skills in an online learning environment. Currently OUC provides online instructor workshops in August; however with the creation of an academic development centre the training could be expanded.

### 7.2 Accessing New Markets

An increasing number of adult learners are participating in part and full-time courses that satisfy a particular need. Whether they are looking for skills upgrading, a major career change, or mid career professionals looking for professional development credits, adults have a wide variety of learning opportunities to choose from. These include:

- Part time continuing education and academic programs.
- Professional development workshops held at hotels and conference centres.
- Courses and programs provided by professional institutes.
- Full time studies at a University or College.

The majority of these courses and workshops are delivered using a face-to-face delivery mode. Prospective students will generally choose their courses using criteria which generally includes a combination of course content, availability, and price. For today's learner, distance learning methods add a new dimension to this selection process.

- Content – DL can readily incorporate a multi-media approach to learning that allows the learner to match the method of delivery to their style of learning.
- Availability - DL brings the content to the student, rather than forcing the learner to travel to the course.
- Price – DL can reduce the total cost of learning for the student. Learners are not required to give up their jobs or incur travel expenses to participate in a course or workshop.

For the new Institutions, DL provides additional opportunities to extend their learning products to new markets. Accessing new non-traditional markets will be crucial in upcoming years due to the declining enrolment wave that is moving through the K to 12 sector. This anomaly is due in part to the demographic shift that is happening as the Baby Boomer's children grow up and leave school. In the past six year period local schools have seen a 20 to 30% enrolment drop. This demographic shift has created a major financial impact for primary and secondary schools all over the province. Over the next twelve-year period Bruce Hunt , the Secretary Treasurer of School District 83 predicts the number of high School graduates will be reduced by 40%. These local predictions are in keeping with the province wide projections and highlight the need to access new markets. Mid-career professionals in search of "just in time" training are one market of prospective students that can be attracted by the many options and learner benefits that DL has to offer.

Opportunities for future development of DL and collaboration between UBC Okanagan and the new Okanagan College are as follows:

- Partnerships between UBC Okanagan and the new Okanagan College that emphasise collaboration on the development and marketing of new courses and programs.
- Articulation agreements and prior learning assessments that allow learners to leverage their studies by moving seamlessly from continuing education courses to degree programs.
- Focused activities to address increased capacity by reaching remote regions and new markets.

### 7.3 Infrastructure

**Delivery issues:**

- Ensure that collective agreements identify issues related to distributed learning in a more comprehensive way. The collective agreements currently in place include clauses relative to distributed learning; however, the information needs to be revised and expanded upon.
- Ensure financial incentives for instructors to engage in distributed learning development and teaching. The current system does not recognise distributed learning instructors as equivalent to face-to-face instructors.
- Ensure that instructors have up-to-date, state of the art equipment to deliver distributed learning courses and adequate technical support resources to support course delivery.

**Course Development:**

- Increase funding for distributed learning to maintain current courses and develop new ones. Extension Services currently has a modest budget for this purpose; however, in order to maintain existing courses and develop new ones, this budget will need to be substantially increased.
- Ensure adequate technical and administrative support resources for course development work. I.e. Academic Development Centre
- Partner on the development of Learning-Object Repository.

**Administrative Resources:**

- Ensure adequate resources are in place to support courses and students, i.e. preparation of course materials, exam invigilation, marketing of programs and courses.
- Examine the potential for establishing a Distributed Learning Department

## 8.0 Round 2 Actions

In round one of the DL University Circle process, a limited circle of OUC staff who are directly involved with distance and distributed learning, identified relevant issues and opportunities for the purpose of informing the transition team and supporting the future development of DL at UBC Okanagan.

In round two of the DL University Circle process the participants would like to provide specific recommendations from an expanded circle of stakeholders that will enhance the development and delivery of DL at UBC Okanagan. In addition insure that the new DL initiatives are aligned to the vision and values of UBC Okanagan and that the commitment to teaching excellence of both institutions includes a DL strategy.

In order to effectively carry out round two the following steps will be required:

- Feedback from UBC on which areas of the identified opportunities or issues they would like to see more research conducted and specific recommendations developed
- Development of a workplan that identifies objectives, actions, and timelines
- Allocation of sufficient resources to ensure timely completion of workplan
- Establishment of an expanded circle of Distributed Learning stakeholders that includes administrators, faculty members, students and subject matter experts

## Appendix A

### DL University Circle Members

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