

To: Craig Dorman, VP Academic Affairs and Karen Perdue, Chair Educational Technology Team

From: Curt Madison, Chair Distance Education Steering Board

Regarding: Report to the Educational Technology Team for background understanding of Alaska Legislative 2005 Audit of Distance Education

This report is intended to be an explanatory vehicle to non-specialist politicians, administrators, and others in Alaska with a stake in distance education implementation.

Distance delivery of education has long been the province of higher education. The various delivery modes date back more than a century. However, we are now in a time of great change for the design and delivery of learning to higher education, life-long learners, and K-12 users. This report seeks to orient readers to the trends and opportunities as we enter the 21st century.

The report will address the following questions:

1. What is a plausible working definition of distance education for the next five years in Alaska?
2. How do Alaska institutions compare to institutions in other states in the areas of enrollment, retention, and cost of distance education courses?
3. What are the best practices associated with distance delivery especially regarding cross-institution sharing of students and revenue?
4. What are some poignant cases of the practice of distance education in Alaska?
5. What are the main drivers motivating adoption of distance education in Alaska?
6. What is the role of K-12 distance education as a feeder to higher education?
7. What is the role of distance education in the core mission of K-12?

Relevant statistics include:

1. Number of Alaska residents using financial aid for study outside Alaska.
2. Number of K-12 distance course enrollments by district in Alaska.
3. Number of requests for transfer transcripts from Alaska institutions to non-Alaska locations.
4. Comparison of graduation rates for students using distance delivery of courses to those who do not while keeping demographics constant.
5. Demographic profile of users of distance education in Alaska compared to national studies.

This report can be completed in 60-90 days by forging a collaboration between the Alaska Distance Education Consortium (ADEC), the UA Distance Education Steering Board (DESB), and an outside consultant such as the Western Cooperative for Educational Technology (WCET).

ADEC could gather all Alaska K-12 statistics. DESB could gather all Alaska higher education statistics, WCET could gather all the national comparative statistics, CDE could compile all materials, print, and disseminate the report.

The overall budget needs to be funded circa \$30,000 evenly split between ADEC and DESB.