FACULTY SUPPORT

The College provides an ongoing program of appropriate technical, design, and production support for faculty members teaching classes using the Internet. Faculty have several services for support when preparing online courses/programs, including grant funding from the College Foundation, individual computer access in faculty offices from Computer Services, and ongoing instruction and training workshops and mini courses in the College's Teaching and Learning Center and the Professional Development Institute. The Instructional Technology office design and production staff consists of an instructional designer, graphic designer, video editor, photographer/videographer, and audio recording and editing personnel to support various media incorporated in online classes. Workshops are made available throughout the year at the East Peoria, Peoria, and North campuses.

The College employs an Instructional Technology Specialist who focuses on the design, development and delivery of online instruction. The Instructional Technology Specialist's role in program and course development includes the instructional administration of the College's course management system, the design and delivery of faculty development events related to online learning, and in one-on-one training and consultation with faculty developing and delivering online instruction. In addition to an Instructional Technology Specialist, the College employs an Instructional Graphic Designer.

Not only does the College promote support during the development of a course for online delivery, it also provides training in preparation. Faculty teaching online are strongly encouraged to attend an institute designed around the College's course management system. This institute is a four-day workshop using the Blackboard Course Management System held at various times throughout the year. Twenty-five of the fifty-nine instructors teaching on online have completed this institute. Faculty also are encouraged to take an online course prior to teaching an online course. Ongoing professional development is available through the Office of Instructional Innovation and Faculty Development and the Teaching Learning Center as well as state agencies such as the Illinois Community Colleges Online Learning Academy and the Illinois Online Network. Online faculty may also take advantage of semi-formal and informal peer mentor opportunities. A majority of faculty delivering online instruction voluntarily participate in orientation and training events related to online learning. Over fifty-four instructors have committed more that two hours to internal consultation and training for online teaching. A detailed listing is in Appendix II.   Many faculty also seek one-on-one assistance in designing and improving their courses. When new information technologies are employed, faculty are encouraged to acquire the necessary technological skill as well as to become aware of and to make necessary changes in pedagogical strategies. Pedagogical changes are often addressed in training and development.

Support from Staff

Faculty are also supported by the College's excellent staff throughout the College who help orient and provide support to students involved in online classes. Although faculty are primarily responsible for working with students, other College staff working directly with students may include library, computer lab, help desk, and help lab staff. These staff members assist students with accessing course materials and trouble-shooting technical problems related to online learning. These staff members also participate in periodic in-service training events. The College also provides technology services orientation training for students to introduce student technology services, electronic library services, and the Blackboard Course Management System. This orientation is guided by faculty and students familiar with online learning.

Faculty, library, help desk, and lab staff involved in designing in-service training and making recommendations for training improvement based on their experiences in assisting students feel that the College is successful in helping students.

Support from Administration

In the development of online courses and programs, the College and its participating faculty have considered issues of workload, compensation, ownership of intellectual property resulting from program development, and implications of program participation for the faculty with its long-standing agreement regarding contractual courses that applies to Internet course offerings. In the last contract cycle, an agreement was established to support online office hours that benefit students enrolled in such classes. While no contractual language addresses intellectual property issues, the College does have a recommended policy of ownership when mini-grant grants are used to support online course development.

Two related areas apply as parallels for the processes the College is using for its online degree: Interactive Distance Learning (two-way video) and Dual-Credit in high schools. In these cases, as with online delivery, the medium conforms to customary processes: duration, class size, materials support, and facilities support.

STUDENT SUPPORT

Illinois Central College provides adequate access to the range of student services appropriate to support online courses and programs. The College has a commitment to the continuation of the programs for a period sufficient to enable all admitted students to complete a degree or certificate in a publicized timeframe.

The Marketing Services Department is responsible for all aspects of branding and external communication, including promotional materials, and works closely with the Webmaster. Marketing works with the College's planning and research offices, and individual departments to assess market demands and needs, track outcomes of marketing initiatives, and create marketing strategies to fulfill the College mission and strategic plan.

As previously mentioned, the College budget process incorporates online classes within departments and, in this way, online classes do not stand alone. This shows a strong commitment by the College to the courses.

Illinois Central College provides access and support services to distance and online learners through a variety of student services. Access and information about these services are available through traditional methods such as telephone, mail, fax, and most recently through online options. Services provided online include pre-admissions counseling, admissions, registration, student accounting, placement, academic advisement, financial aid, orientation, catalog, and course schedule information, technical support, program and degree information, student records, and access services for students with disabilities.

Admission, Advisement, and Registration

Prospective, new, and returning students may access or request information, apply to the College, register for classes, apply for financial assistance, search for open classes, receive transfer information, view transcript information, and view student financial information online.

Registration and admission procedures are the same ones for online students as they are for traditional ones with the steps and procedures being identical. Students receive pre-admission counseling through the College's recruitment page of the College website or by emailing the admissions representatives at info@icc.edu. Also, with the implementation of PeopleSoft in November 2002, students may now apply directly to the College online. An immediate notification of receipt of information is provided to the student. An official notice of admission to the College is provided to the student within a week. Students can then apply for financial assistance through ICC's website. Online pdf files for students include Illinois Central College's Financial Assistance Application Form and Scholarship Matching Form. Students can print these forms and mail them to the Financial Assistance office. Students are

also provided a link to apply directly for the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) through www.fafsa.ed.gov.

Placement and academic advisement information is also available for all students through the College's website or by telephone. For placement services, students must come to campus or have the exam/placement test proctored at an approved site. ACT is planning to provide the COMPASS test as an online option in the near future. Students will then need to attend an approved site to have the exam proctored. For academic advisement, students may contact their advisor via email or telephone. A complete list of advisors and the program areas is available at www.icc.edu/sseerv/careerplan/advisement or by calling 309 694-5281. Once having received academic advisement, students may access information about programs, courses, or class openings through the College's website or by contacting any academic department. Students can get information without seeing an advisor; however, they cannot register for a full-time load without an advisor Students may register, add, or drop classes directly through the online registration system. Students may also use the College's operator-assisted registration options available during the registration peak periods.

Once students register they can make payment toward their account via mail, telephone, or walk-in. However, beginning Spring Semester 2004, students will be able to make payments online through the FACTS Management Company. Students will be able to authorize an ACH payment from either a checking or savings account or can charge payments to a VISA, MasterCard, or Discover credit card. The online payment option will simplify the payment process for many students. The bookstore is working on a plan to enable students to purchase books online. To accomplish this the College is in the process of establishing a secure line.

Student Academic Records and Accounting Information

With the addition of PeopleSoft, students can now view or print information regarding their financial status, academic grade history/transcript by semester or in its entirety, as well as their class schedule online. From the College's homepage students click on the icon "Current Students: Grades/Transcripts/Add/Drop classes" and follow the instructions after entering their unique Login ID and password. In January 2004, ICC hopes to provide an online "Petition to Graduate" form. A student will be able to download the form, print, and mail it back to ICC. Students currently are able to download and print a Transcript Request form from the homepage. Once the Transcript Request form is completed, the student can return it via the mail with their payment. However, in January 2004, the College hopes to provide a complete online option for students requesting transcripts.

Support Services and Retention Programs

Illinois Central College has developed and is continuing to develop a number of online services aimed at supporting all students but specifically distance and online learners. A course completion study by core subject area indicated that the two year, Fall 2002 – Spring 2003 retention rate of online students is not as consistently high as that of students in on-campus classes. However, in reviewing the statistics of the study, a two-year trend of improvement is indicated. ICC has made a commitment to providing programs and services aimed at supporting the success of online and distance learners. The Illinois Virtual Campus (IVC) current online tutoring service is being piloted by the College. Students have access to online help from tutors provided by colleges throughout the state. ICC is currently providing tutors for this service. The College is evaluating the service and making suggestions for improvement.

The College has also completed a series of orientation programs that target online learners. For example, the College now offers two new Internet course options: PSY 114 and PSY 119. The PSY 114 course is a college orientation course designed to introduce students to the rigors of college, the services provided, survival skills, and successful transition from high school to college. This course, along with PSY 119, has always been available through a classroom setting and is now available online. The PSY 119 class has been used to target undecided students providing them with guidance and career exploration.

In addition to the online PSY 114 and PSY courses, ICC is planning to develop a brief College orientation program through the College's website. The orientation will be free to anyone visiting the College's homepage and will introduce viewers to information about the College's programs and services. The orientation will also assess a student's readiness for college work.

There is a well-designed Frequently Asked Questions service on the College website. The student page also includes useful links such as Blackboard Tips, Resources, and Downloads. All students enrolled in a Blackboard course site are automatically enrolled in a Blackboard Orientation course site that supplies additional information and a complete overview to Blackboard. The College also provides a Help Desk that offers help to students by telephone, email, and facsimile from 7 a.m.-10 p.m. Monday-Friday during the regular semester schedule. This time schedule is subject to review as more classes go online and there is an increased need for extended hours of support service. Walk-in support is also available if the students are on campus. Faculty teaching individual courses and programs with specific technology requirements inform the students and work with them to answer any technical problems in conjunction with the Computer Information Services Help Desk.

Illinois Central College has continued to further develop the College website to make it more accessible to students with disabilities including technology that supports

voice and text browsers for students with visual and audio impairments. Moreover, the College is committed to supporting the Web Accessibility Initiative (WAI) through Section 508. The web design staff have structured a very informative and accessible website for Illinois Central College. Thus, all of the information a student would need is accessible online. Additional information available online includes the course catalog, the class schedule with an option to search for open classes or to monitor the number of seats available, the student handbook with all the policies and procedures, and financial aid and scholarship information. The strengths of our online student support are centered on the many self-service options for students.

Library

The students taking online classes are adequately served by the College's library. Currently, the library has a collection of 19,000 electronic books that are available to students from any location including home access. In addition, the collection of e-books is being expanded monthly and provides access to over 11,000 electronic journals, periodical and serials, via the library webpage. All services offered by the library to students at the College, including a PowerPoint library instruction session, interlibrary loan service, and email "ask a librarian" are available via the College webpage.

The College participates in a consortia which provides 24/7 reference service via the Internet. A student can access the "My Web Librarian" service by a link which is available via the library webpage. As a result of the library services available via Internet, online students are able to satisfy all their library needs.