

Justification for Faculty Coordinator of Equity in Online Education

Position title: Faculty Coordinator of Equity in Online Education

Online learning at De Anza has increased exponentially over the past decade. Below is a table of the dramatic growth of online education over the past ten years:

Table 1 – Number of sections, instructions, and students with a fully online or hybrid online component

	F11	F19	F20	F21	F22 estimate*
Number of sections	177	460	1703	1466	1482
Number of instructors	89	207	600	532	522
Number of students (enrolled)	5913	17244	49563	41351	43120

Table 2 – Percentage of increase in sections, instructions, and students with a fully online or hybrid online component

	increase from F11 to F19	increase from F11 to F20	increase from F11 to F21	increase from F11 to F22*
Number of sections	260%	962%	828%	837%
Number of instructors	233%	674%	598%	587%
Number of students (enrolled)	292%	838%	699%	729%

As seen in Tables 1-2, the growth in online learning reached 292% even before the pandemic. In the height of the Covid-19 pandemic, the growth in online learning reached 962%. Even post-pandemic, there will continue to be a demand for support for online learning because many classes with a face-to-face component will still require an online learning component as well. Based on the results of the student survey conducted Fall 2021, 87% of students wanted some form of online learning component (either 57% fully online, 20% a combination of in-person and fully online sections, and 10% hybrid sections). Thus, we expect to see levels of growth from F11 to beyond F21 to reach up to 837% even post-pandemic.

In direct contrast to the rapid growth of online learning demand is the dramatic decrease in staffing in the Online Education Office. A decade ago, the Online Education Office was staffed with two instructional associates, one instructional designer, a systems administrator, a supervisor, and a Dean of Learning resources—a total of six positions. Currently, the office is staffed by one instructional associate and two instructional designers, a 50% cut in the staffing level. The campus also lost a technology trainer.

In March 2020, the Online Education Office in conjunction with Professional Development worked to get all faculty technically trained on Canvas. Despite the wonderful service that the office provided, the training was minimal because of the sheer quantity of instructors who needed training in a short time period and the lack of enough staff to help train. Considering that two instructional designers and one instructional associate must support over 600 hundred faculty, almost 18,000 unique students, and all classified professionals and administrators, obviously the levels of support will need to remain at a basic technical level moving forward.

However, we need to go beyond just a basic technical competency to help faculty infuse more equity-minded practices into online learning. While many of our targeted populations do prefer face-to-face classes, the reality

is that many of them also take online classes, often because their work schedules, family obligations, and long commutes require them to have a more flexible schedule.

Therefore, our campus needs to focus on more digital pathways for students to succeed and reach their academic goals. Currently we have only a handful of degrees or certificates that students can earn entirely online. Even the few that exist do not necessarily offer the required courses consistently through an online modality. A faculty coordinator would be able to focus on the curricular and programmatic development of online education. For one, the position could help establish a peer-review support system to help improve the quality of online education. The position would work with departments and divisions to ensure that curricular and programmatic offerings are equity-minded such as following universal design, addressing a diversity of learning styles, and using innovative online pedagogy to help instructors engage in more student-instructor and student-student contact. We also need a faculty coordinator to interact regularly with Academic Senate, Curriculum, Professional Development, and departments and divisions.

Currently, there is an Online Education faculty coordinator who is compensated through additional pay, but that position is part-time, available for only a maximum of 10 hours per week, and the funding for the additional pay is not a standard part of the budget. Instead, every year, monies must be found to fund the position, and there is no guarantee that the position can be funded on an ongoing basis.

Failure to fill this position: While Tables 1-2 compare data for online learning, they do not capture the amount of responsibilities beyond online education that the office has assumed in service to the college at large. These duties include providing support for the following Canvas accounts: classified professionals' and administrators' Canvas accounts; department and division accounts including subaccounts such as self-placement Canvas shells, Customized Support Activities, Study Abroad, student athlete communication, English/ESL challenge portal; tenure review; J1 and J2 evaluations; International Student Program new student registration module; Counseling and Advising resources; De Anza College Promise; De Anza Honors Program; One Book One College; Community Education Summer Academy; Guided Pathways; Welcome Day; Zoom support; Course Studio; Turnitin; and much more.

Most of these needs do not fall under the scope of the Online Education Office and they will need to move forward unsupported without significantly bolstering staffing levels in Online Education. Furthermore, without additional positions including the faculty coordinator, the ability to help support online education will be drastically reduced and response times will easily be doubled or tripled the current timeframe since this level of support cannot be sustained post-pandemic. The only reason the campus was able to survive through the pandemic was because the Online Education Office received support from other instructional and student service areas across campus such as the Library supporting Libchat and the Professional Development office helping prepare instructors for Canvas and Zoom. However, as these services return to campus, and they continue to provide services both in person and online, they will no longer be available to assist Online Education at the levels they were during the pandemic.

The Online Education Office needs not only a faculty coordinator but a director of Online Education as well as another classified position. Only then will we have adequate staffing to meet the needs of a new digital world of online education and online work. As we have seen many times across campus, there is a danger in being reactive rather than proactive, and our current staffing levels only permit us to be reactive.

No area on campus is witnessing this level of enrollment increase; in fact, most areas are declining in enrollment, sometimes even in double digits. If we want to continue offering robust online learning, we need to make sure the infrastructure is sustainable. Thank you for your consideration.