



**EXCERPT FROM THE
EXECUTIVE [EXEC] COMMITTEE MEETING
June 10, 2016**

Chair Nickerson made a MOTION: *Consistent with Unity College’s Board approved Strategic Plan, the Executive Committee empowers the President to take all actions necessary to launch a new Distance Education approach as described in the DRAFT document entitled “[Distance Education at Unity College: A New Approach](#)” with the understanding that the President will deliver a final proposal for full Board approval at the 2016-17 Q1 Summer Quarterly Meeting with an accompanying supporting budget.* Trustee Newlin seconded the motion, which *passed unanimously*.

Distance Education at Unity College: A New Approach

Problem Statement — In spite of considerable effort by many, the distance education initiative at Unity College to date has failed to launch. Changes to tactics, deadlines, curriculum, scale, and personnel have yielded minimal results.

A new approach to distance education is clearly needed — one that does not ask current faculty and staff to choose between developing distance programs and delivering on the educational standard our current students deserve. By solving the bandwidth challenges now facing distance education initiatives, Unity College will also be pre-adapted for success with remote and sustainable enterprise projects moving forward.

Document Definitions — For the purposes of this discussion, it will help to define terms used in this document.

1. *Unity College (UC)* will refer to the institution and encompassing legal unit of Unity College.
2. *Unity College Enterprise (UCE)* or *enterprise-wide* will refer to the highest level administrative unit of Unity College which includes the Unity College President, her/his executive team, and any units or departments that provide oversight and/or services for the entire Unity College institution (UCE and SEBUs) as the primary purpose or function.
3. *Strategic Education Business Unit (SEBU)* will refer to one of several discrete organizational units within the institution that serve as a component of Unity College in support of its mission and institutional goals.
4. *Unity College: Residential* or *residential* will refer to the SEBU consisting of the educational and residential programs currently taking place primarily at 90 Quaker Hill Rd., Unity, ME.
5. *Unity College: Distance Education (UCDE)* or *distance education* will refer to the SEBU currently consisting of graduate and undergraduate distance education initiatives.

Guidelines for Distance Education Success Going Forward — New design principles for programs, planning, staffing, policy, and budget are required to yield different results for distance education initiatives. In order to facilitate success Unity College must do the following:

1. **Prepare a distance education** program that 1) is fully accredited, 2) does not compete with the residential educational program, 3) provides for a flexible approach to education modalities, calendars, assessment, evaluation, and pedagogy, 4) creates a pathway for curriculum development and approval distinct from the residential curriculum process, and 5) aligns with governance documents.
2. **Prepare a project development plan** that 1) salvages good efforts to this point but is not bound by prior decisions, sunk costs, or work completed if they present obstacles or conflict with these guiding principles, 2) includes a marketing plan that leverages core brand equity while

differentiating the distance education experience, 3) ensures flexibility to launch various distance education initiatives including graduate and undergraduate distance education, remote locations, and sustainable enterprises, 4) aligns with governance documents, 5) ensures integration between distance and residential programs where appropriate for enterprise-wide efficiency, but provides for individual integrity of policies and educational programs between residential, distance education, and any other SBEUs.

3. **Develop a staffing plan** that 1) identifies a chief distance education officer, 2) provides adequate capacity, expertise, and protections to eliminate competition for human resources between residential and distance education programs while leveraging enterprise-wide personnel for greatest efficiency, and 3) ensures that at least 51% of programs are taught by full time distance education faculty.
4. **Create distance education faculty and staff policy handbooks** that 1) protect current employees and the residential program by isolating distance education personnel into a discrete work unit, 2) create differential pay structures if needed; for example, to accommodate for regional differences in cost of living for future employees, 3) facilitate work schedules and working requirements of remote and out-of-office personnel, 4) distinguish between enterprise-wide, residential, and distance education personnel.
5. **Create a distance education student policy handbook** that 1) protects residential students and programs and creates a discrete distance education student body, 2) distinguishes between residential and distance education students and outlines the process (if any) for participating in or changing between residential and distance education programs, 3) provides for differential tuition and financial aid between programs, regions, and delivery modalities.
6. **Develop a distinct distance education budget** that 1) identifies sources of initial investment, 2) operates as an independent ROI cost and revenue center 3) specifies ROI payback and program viability schedules and expectations, 4) provides differential budgeting for programs to accommodate for regional operating cost differences, 5) provides for differential tuition and financial aid structures, and 6) ensures revenue enhancement and prohibits revenue shifting between residential, distance education, and any other SBEUs.

SUMMARY PARAMETERS — 1) All programs will be mission driven in accordance with the current mission statement of Unity College and consistent with the Strategic Plan, 2) no distance education degrees or majors will be offered that are also offered on the residential campus, 3) the initiative will be evaluated annually on the basis of progress on the implementation of this new approach, 4) the initiative will utilize as its initial investment board-released plant funds that are now a part of the strategic initiative fund, 5) distance education course credits will not be considered part of a residential student's standard tuition 12-16 semester credits, 6) the initiative will recommend reassessment of the board committee structure, 7) course adoption for distance education will be the responsibility of the distance education faculty; distance education faculty will not have responsibility for residential curriculum and residential faculty will not have responsibility for the distance education curriculum.

Strategic Plan References

G1: OBJECTIVE 3: Develop a Mission Driven Online Undergraduate Program and Graduate Program

G6: OBJECTIVE 3: Diversify revenue to provide new resources to enable strategic growth through Online Undergraduate and Graduate Programs, Robust Summer Programming, & Offsite initiatives at a minimum

Unity College Distance Education Outline

Unity College: Distance Education programming is meant to be a supplement to the traditional Unity College: Residential experience, rather than a replacement. This is a necessary next step in the evolutionary growth of the college.

Guiding Principles

1. Unity College: Distance Education is a separate and distinct operation with a separate and distinct revenue stream from Unity College: Residential – there will be no cost shifting
2. IT platforms, will of course, be enterprise-wide however accounting for Unity College: Distance Education technology will be tracked separately
3. Residential undergraduate classes being taught using technology are part of Unity College: Residential and NOT part of Unity College: Distance Education
4. Distance education enables degree completion to existing students by offering a small range of undergraduate classes during the summer session
5. Distance education encourages career advancement by offering a Masters in Professional Science Degree with several track options for degree candidates
6. Distance education is open to participation for any non-matriculated individual interested in taking the courses we offer as class space permits

Key Targets

1. Alumni who are already aware of Unity College and for whom an distance education Master's Degree is a natural next step
2. Regional professionals seeking career advancement for whom a Master's of Professional Science Degree would assist them in their goals
3. Networked professionals outside of New England who may be seeking an affordable convenient degree, e.g., Park Rangers across the country
4. Existing students who need specific courses offered over the summer to help in degree completion

Key Marketing Messages

1. Masters of Professional Science can help you advance your career
2. Accredited program with faculty who are leaders in their field
3. Convenient & affordable
4. Unity College – America's Environmental College now offering Graduate Degrees
5. Significant celebration of degree completion

Guiding Principles

1. Distance education will create and offer additional strategic graduate offerings as determined by the College Senior Staff team once base system and processes are in place, i.e., Track 3 in the MPS
2. Distance education will offer high quality programs and courses covered by institutional accreditation and associated NEASC standards as well as by any related external guidelines
3. Programs offered will be determined by strategic intent and market demand keeping with the overall Unity College positioning and brand
4. Quality of course content will be determined by the use of the industry standard "Quality Matters" rubric as well as a combination of market-driven needs assessment, the use of an web-based faculty-driven review process, and student evaluations

5. Separate distance education admissions and program support “Concierge” – dedicated person acting as admission counselor and registrar
6. Academic calendar already approved by Senior Staff and being integrated with overall college 3-year calendar
7. IT investments will need to be made to stay current and enable larger numbers of participants, commensurate to enrollment growth
8. IT platforms will be integrated across the campus however costs of IT will be allocated to the distance education program in order to assess real expenses
9. Faculty compensation is from a Unity College: Distance Education P&L and is separate and distinct from any existing faculty/college agreements and contracts
10. The program intent is to work towards a separate and distinct faculty so as to not detract from the residential experience in any way
 - a. Any existing faculty teaching in the distance education program will do so in an overload/adjunct capacity – this will not be considered part of the base in-load assignment
 - b. As we move toward full-time teaching positions in the on-line program this new faculty will not be considered under the auspices of the current Faculty PPP
11. A Unity College: Distance Education Faculty Handbook will be created and approved by the BOT; A Unity College: Distance Education Student Handbook will be created and approved by the BOT
12. Unity College will work with a law firm to determine the best legal organization to ensure the integrity of the enterprise approach.

Why Unity College Distance Education?

1. To diversify revenue streams
2. To build capability and capacity for future growth
3. To adjust to new market trends
4. To expand the Unity College brand
5. To gain the technological capacity to think bigger within the residential scope
6. To capitalize, using distance education, to create sustainability beachheads across Maine

Resources Needed

1. Build independent operational unit with flexibility and authority to move beyond current residential policy and processes
2. At minimum, need to build a comprehensive budget that supports operational, academic, technological, administrative, and student success bandwidth
3. Clearly delineate cost of doing business against its potential return on investment
4. Specific startup to include: Chief Distance Education Officer; recruitment and advising personnel; instructional designer / course developer; and full time faculty member responsible for curriculum, assessment, and academic integrity
5. Plan built on 3-year payback to break even at a minimum
6. Resources should not negatively affect residential operation and budget

Definition of Success

1. Adds capacity to residential experience
2. Increases brand awareness
3. Reaches new markets otherwise unattainable by residential experience
4. Operates with a 20-30% margin