



Distance and Online Education at CU Boulder

Distance and online education emerged early and often throughout Academic Futures conversations. The emerging themes can generally be summarized as 'supporting teaching excellence, regardless of modality.' There was a strong sense that CU must develop a comprehensive and integrated approach to distance and online education in order to be competitive with our peers.

Current State: Clearly, CU Boulder already has assets in this area and seems to be moving in the right direction, identified as including:

- A number of great online initiatives, lecture capture, online course and programs (though not all aligned)
- Beds of innovation (For example, Continuing Education operates as a skunk works. And the Modified Language Program for student who can't complete language requirements because of disability/trauma)
- Almost 30 departments have at least 1 online course
- Many full GPTI lines funded by Continuing Education to give doctoral students teaching experience online

Campus input identified several critical challenges for effectively opening up to the potential of online and distance education:

- Decentralized silos, with no cohesive campus-level strategy, measures or leadership
- A sense that we are behind our peer institutions
- Faculty resistance amid fears of change, loss of jobs, academic dishonesty, technological barriers
- Lack of technical infrastructure and support

Key Areas for Consideration: To move forward towards a comprehensive approach to distance and online education, campus input identified several key areas for consideration:

- Leadership that works with campus to develop and implement a comprehensive approach to distance and online education
- Pedagogical excellence, firmly based in research-based best practices. This is not using technology for technology's sake, but is driven by pedagogical purpose, course objectives, and desired learning outcomes
- Flexible Academic Structures, including stackable credentials, ability of students to mix and match online and face-to-face classes, industry-based programs, etc.





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- **Technology Support and Infrastructure**, including improved technology in many more classrooms to increase capacity for distance learning, cutting edge technology tools widely available across campus, central production support and training for faculty, interconnected delivery modalities, etc.
- **Culture**: The "Yes, we can" attitude is foremost to our success. We also need to realize that we work in a system. Instead of providing reasons for not moving forward, we need to figure out how to change, revise, as necessary, to accomplish the desired goal.

If successful, what might we see at CU Boulder? The campus input suggests that, CU Boulder should develop an effective strategy for online and distance education. As a fully functioning ecosystem, CU Boulder would be at the forefront of education, known not only as a R1 research university, but also as a top provider of needed quality education no matter where the students or faculty happen to be. Aspect of this success include:

- A student-centric education system with robust course offerings (certificates, degrees, stand-alone courses) that meet students where they are and meet their needs
- Dynamic, creative learning communities in a well-defined and cohesive ecosystem that allows educators to use the right modality for their subject (for both in-resident and distance students)
- An increase in nontraditional students with associated increases in equity, diversity, accessibility and a global footprint.

White Papers submitted to Academic Futures in this area

- *What is a MOOC in 2018? (Haynes)*
- *The future of large lecture spaces (Fell et al.)*
- *Ideas On a Structure for Managing/Defining/Marketing Online Education (Draper)*
- *Effect of learning-by-teaching in a flipped classroom (Li et al.)*





- *A case for investing in and centralizing distance/online/MOOC education on main campus (McClanahan)*

