

Open Letter to the CSU re: Cal State Online

The Cal State Online project is underway and work has begun to provide increased access to CSU program excellence, ensuring that the CSU is a leader in innovation and technology enhanced education, providing comprehensive, world class student support services to online education programs and course offerings systemwide and providing marketing and outreach for the best possible online education to the broadest possible spectrum of society. The Cal State Online Board hopes that you will join us in supporting this important work and embracing the future for excellence in online education within our system.

This open letter to the CSU Community strives to give stakeholders and interested parties an overview of the Cal State Online vision and mission, history and background, leadership, initial program participation and the upcoming RFP process designed to guide the search for the services and vendors that will support the project. This letter also explains the options for discussion, conversation and comment on the Cal State Online initiative and the upcoming RFP.

History and Background

The "Cal State Online," initiative began in 2010 as an online learning initiative sponsored by the Technology Steering Committee (TSC) focused on addressing California's expanding workforce needs and increasing access to high quality education. Since inception, the initiative has followed a broad-based, consultative process. The process has included a [CSU Online Working Group](#) composed of Distance Learning management, faculty representation, and Academic Senate members. The CSU Online Working Group managed a consulting firm hired to conduct a detailed analysis of online learning at the CSU. The consultants held meetings with a large number of CSU constituents and advisory groups, and held interviews with hundreds of faculty, students and administrators at several campuses.

10 Guiding Principles

Following the consultant's work, the TSC developed an [Online Overview document](#) articulating the following 10 Guiding Principles for the Cal State Online initiative:

1. The project is a coalition of the willing and participation is optional
 - a. Campuses may choose to participate in the initiative with one or more programs
 - b. Faculty may choose to teach online
 - c. Students may choose to take online courses
2. Compensation, recognition, training and support for faculty
 - a. Extra work will be compensated

- b. Online teaching will be recognized in the retention, promotion and tenure process where appropriate
 - c. Necessary and sufficient faculty training and support will be provided
- 3. Equal access for students
 - a. Sufficient financial aid will be provided to allow online options to be accessible to all
- 4. World class student services
 - a. Online students services will reflect best practices
 - b. Services will include academic advising, career services, financial aid, technical support
- 5. Place should not be overlooked
 - a. On site components for online course offerings will be considered to leverage the physical infrastructures of the CSU campuses
- 6. Pricing
 - a. Prices will be competitive in the higher education online market
- 7. Quality of courses
 - a. Online courses will meet or exceed the quality standards of CSU face-to-face courses
- 8. Technology
 - a. The CSU Online technology infrastructure will be flexible and adaptable
- 9. Business processes
 - a. Business processes will enable creativity and innovation
 - b. Business processes be nimble, adaptable and responsive
- 10. Existing programs and resources will be leveraged wherever possible
 - a. Existing expertise will be utilized where possible
 - b. Existing campus degree programs will be respected

Initial Focus Areas

In addition to the 10 Guiding Principles, the TSC outlined a tactical entrance into systemwide online program offerings by focusing on areas in which CSU campuses are already strong and proficient. Accordingly, the TSC recommended that Cal State Online initially focus on two areas for initial roll out. The 60 or so fully online self-support programs that currently exist throughout the CSU will comprise our initial effort with an eye toward serving the extensive mid-career professional and unemployed adults who are in need of this level of education to advance their careers. A full listing of the CSU's online self-support programs is available on the [Cal State Online website](#). The second focus should be the presentation of two or three degree completion programs in an effort to enhance workforce development. The TSC Overview also outlined a proposed timeline for launch of these programs in fall of 2012. The Cal State Online Board remains committed to these two initial focus areas, the 10 Guiding Principles and a fall term 2012 beta test with a full launch expected in spring of 2013. The TSC Overview document and the Cal State Online Katz Consulting documents are available on the new [Cal State Online website](#).

Initial funding for the project was secured in late 2011 when each campus provided \$50,000 in seed funding. In late 2011, the Steering Committee also hired Cal State Online's founding Executive Director, Ruth Claire Black and the Chancellor appointed the Cal State Online Board.

Cal State Online Board

At the initial Board Meeting of Cal State Online on November 15th, 2011, the Cal State Online Board of Directors and the officers for the initial terms of service were identified and duly elected. The Board is made up of four CSU Campus Presidents, one CSU Campus Provost or AVP, one CSU Campus Dean of Extended Education, one CSU Academic Technology Steering Committee member, two members of the CSU Statewide Academic Senate and one California State Student Association Representative. The CSU Executive Vice Chancellor/Chief Financial Officer, the CSU Executive Vice Chancellor/Chief Academic Officer and the Chair of the CSU Systemwide Academic Senate are Ex-Officio members of the Board of Directors.

The Cal State Online Board Officers for 2012-2013 are: Chair, Dr. John Welty (Fresno), Vice Chair, Dr. Millie Garcia (Dominguez Hills), Secretary, Dr. Jodie Ullman (San Bernardino) and Chief Financial Officer, Dr. Benjamin Quillian. Further information about the By-Laws of the Cal State Online Board, Board composition and the terms of service of the board members are located on the [Cal State Online website](#).

Academic Control of Programs

While Cal State Online will be an entity to assist student recruitment efforts and provide support for existing and new fully online self-support programs the academic programs will remain academically controlled by their originating campus. All programs participating in Cal State Online are subject to the same approval processes and oversight structures as an on-campus program.

Collective Bargaining Agreements

Cal State Online will adhere to all statewide collective bargaining agreements.

Coalition of the Willing

All fully online self-support operations throughout the CSU system will have the option of participating in Cal State Online with one or more programs that they have developed or that they are developing alone or in consortium with other CSU campuses. While the initial work of Cal State Online will focus on the 60 or so fully online self-support programs that currently exist throughout the CSU, in the future other programs may be eligible to participate.

Academic Calendar

Most fully online self-support programs offered through the Colleges of Extended Learning are designed for working adult students. To serve the needs of working adult students these programs

regularly operate on accelerated or non-traditional term schedules. Cal State Online will assess student demand for accelerated scheduling and will likely continue the tradition of accelerated terms, maximizing course and program flexibility and finding ways to decrease time to graduation as well as increase student support services for this community of learners.

Going Forward, What Are the Next Steps for Cal State Online and the CSU Community?

1) Online Services RFP

Cal State Online will provide a comprehensive set of services to participating programs. It is envisioned that many of these services will be provided by a vendor(s) capable of delivering these services. A listing of the services that Cal State Online seeks to offer is contained in a draft Request for Proposal (RFP) for Online Services. The RFP asks vendors to describe and price the requested services and solicits vendor funding for the Cal State Online organization. This RFP will be issued in April after groups identified below have had the opportunity to comment on the proposed RFP. While the Cal State Online Board is committed to an open and comprehensive RFP process designed to explain and price each service and to determine funding options, the Board has not committed to any specific funding approach, list of services or vendors. A draft of the Online Services RFP is available for review and comment on the new [Cal State Online website](#).

2) Review and Comment Period for the Online Services RFP

Prior to launching the RFP in April 2012 the Cal State Online Board is circulating the Online Services RFP to the following boards, governing organizations and leadership committees for review and comment: Statewide Academic Senate, Executive Council, Faculty Senate Chairs, Presidents, Provosts, VPs Academic Affairs, CABO, ITAC, TSC, ATSC, ATAC, DAT, Deans of Extended Education, Directors of Distance Learning and the Commission on the Extended University. Full participation in discussions about Cal State Online and the Online Services RFP at these boards, governing organizations and leadership committees is strongly encouraged. The new [Cal State Online website](#) also includes an [Cal State Online feedback form](#). Any comments, suggestions or requests for additional service items within the RFP are requested prior to Noon on March 29, 2012.

3) Open Forum Calls, Campus Visits and Campus Communication Liaison

Contemporaneous with the systemwide request for review and comment the Cal State Online Board will host three Open Forum calls to invite discussion and comment from the university community. The Open Forum call schedule and call in information will be posted on the [Cal State Online website](#). Ruth Black, the Executive Director for Cal State Online is also conducting campus visits to gather perspectives from campus constituents. A Cal State Online Campus Liaison will also be appointed at each campus during March 2012. The Cal State Online Campus Liaison will be responsible for coordinating and disseminating information about Cal State Online campus wide and facilitating open dialogue and discussion about the initiative as well as consolidating feedback and comments into a single campus document.

We look forward to discussing these exciting steps forward with stakeholders systemwide and to working with all of the stakeholders and constituencies within the CSU to position Cal State Online as a resource for excellence in online education, innovation and technology enhanced education.

Sincerely,

Ruth Claire Black

Executive Director

On Behalf of the Cal State Online Board

<http://www.calstateonline.net>