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Excellence in Online Education: Preceptions of Needs, Barriers and Catalyst

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Excellence in Online Education at USM:
Perceptions of Needs, Barriers and Catalysts

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Purpose

According to the study *Online Nation: Five Years of Growth in Online Learning* completed by The Sloan Consortium “the number of students taking at least one online course per year continues to expand at a rate far in excess of the growth of overall higher educational enrollments.” (Allen & Seaman, 2007) This study, which surveyed the growth in online enrollments from Fall 2002 through the Fall of 2006, documents a significant increase in annual enrollments. In fact, “students taking at least one online course now represent almost 20 percent of total enrollments in higher education.” (Allen & Seaman, 2007) USM is seeing a similar pattern of growth with an increase of 1582 more students enrolled in online courses during the same five year time period of Fall 2002 to Fall 2006. However, “despite the recent expansion of distance education programs across the United States, many faculty resist participation in distance education.” (Olcott & Wright, 1995) During the past five years that the Sloan Consortium have conducted their studies of online learning in the US the issue of faculty resistance has continued to appear as a potential barrier to the implementation and/or expansion of online learning at higher education institutions. According to the Sloan Consortium previous studies in this series have shown that academic leaders have consistently commented that their faculty often “do not accept the value of online learning and that it takes more time and effort to teach an online course.” (Allen & Seaman, 2007) So with USM’s online enrollments growing annually and institutional support for expanding USM’s online offerings, the question was raised as to just how USM’s faculty population perceives online education. Do the same barriers encountered at other institutions exist at USM? If so, what can be done to help faculty overcome these barriers? Is their sufficient institutional support for expanding online at USM? Are faculty

hesitant to teach on line and if so, why? Are there specific factors that can help motivate faculty to teach online?

Through a review of literary resources and individual interviews with USM faculty and administrators this paper aims to identify both factors that motivate and inhibit faculty from teaching online, as well as assess interest among USM's population in expanding online offerings. This paper also aims to determine areas of concern among faculty and administrators, as well as identify some areas for new and continuing investments in online education at USM. It is hoped that this work will assist USM in developing an institutional policy for online educational offerings at USM that serves both the community and the institution well. It is also hoped that the knowledge gained during this research about faculty perceptions of online will provide the additional information needed to help encourage more faculty members to teach via the online mode of curricular delivery.

Background

It is important to note that the concept of distance education is not new; in fact organized use of correspondence courses first began in the 19th century. However, as new technologies have emerged so have new methods for reaching distance learners. A number of scholars studying distance education have applied a “generational” analogy to describe its evolution. All scholars who have adopted this analogy have stressed that the emergence of a new generation of distance education delivery modes has not entailed the disappearance of previous generations; rather, the generations overlap and co-exist, and are frequently used together in the same program or even the same course. (Matheos & Archer, 2004). The evolution of distance education has progressed through three generations to its current state. The first generation titled “Slow Asynchronous” is what we have come to know as the correspondence course. This

method allowed students to communicate with their faculty member only via the traditional post. The second generation titled “Synchronous” is what we perceive as teleconferencing with communication between the student and instructor via audio and/or video. The third and final generation known, as “Fast Asynchronous” is our current method of instruction which takes place via the Internet.

It is important to clarify that my research focuses only on online education or the generation known as “Fast Asynchronous” and does not include other modes of distance education such as videoconferencing or instructional television. Rather all questions asked of faculty and administrators for this research centered on courses which take place via the Internet, or online. For this research the following three definitions provided by U.S. World and New Report’s E-Learning Guide should offer a good starting point for the remainder of this paper:

Online Education

Credit-granting courses or education training delivered primarily via the Internet to students at remote locations, including their homes. Online courses may be delivered synchronously or asynchronously. An online course may include a requirement that students and teachers meet once or periodically in a physical setting for lectures, labs, or exams, so long as the time spent in the physical setting does not exceed 25 percent of the total course time.

Asynchronous

Learning in which interaction between instructors and students occurs intermittently with a time delay. Examples are self-paced courses taken via the Internet or CD-ROM, Q&A mentoring, online discussion groups, and E-mail.

Synchronous

A real-time, instructor-led online learning event in which all participants are logged on at the same time and communicate directly with each other. In this virtual classroom setting, the instructor maintains control of the class, with the ability to "call on" participants. In most platforms, students and teachers can use a whiteboard to see work in progress and share knowledge. Interaction may also occur via audio- or videoconferencing, Internet telephony, or two-way live broadcasts.

The Growth of Online Education

“Almost 3.5 million students were taking at least one online course during the Fall 2006 term.” (Allen & Seaman, 2007) That figure is up from 1.6 million in the Fall 2002 term.

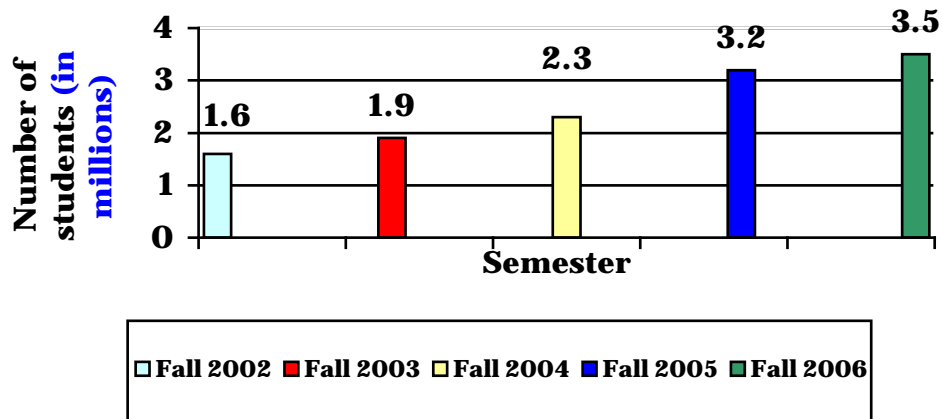
According to the Sloan Consortium report *Online Nation*, “online enrollments have grown at an unprecedented rate [from the period of Fall 2002 to Fall 2006 and] the number of students taking at least one online course has more than doubled” (Allen & Seaman, 2007). In fact, online enrollments have grown almost 4 times faster than traditional in classroom college enrollments.

A more detailed look at the annual increase in online enrollments is provided by The Sloan Consortium in their 2006 study titled *Making the Grade: Online Education in the US, 2006*.

- For the Fall 2002 term, slightly more than 1.6 million students took at least one online course at US degree granting institutions. (Allen & Seaman, 2006)
- The second annual study, *Entering the Mainstream, The Quality and Extent of Online Education in the United States, 2003 and 2004*, found that the overall growth in the number of online learners actually exceeded the optimistic projections of the previous year, increasing at a 22.9 percent rate, to reach 1.9 million online students for Fall of 2003. (Allen & Seaman, 2006)
- This yearly increase of about 360,000 new online learning students was matched by the results of the 2005 study, *Growing by Degrees, Online Education in the United States, 2005*, with more than 2.3 million students taking at least one online course during the 2004 Fall term. (Allen & Seaman, 2006)
- Although expectations were that growth in online courses would begin to level off the data proved otherwise. According to the Sloan study “Higher education institutions taught nearly 3.2 million online students during the Fall term of 2005, an increase of about 850,000 students and a growth rate of 35 percent. (Allen & Seaman, 2006)

The following chart utilizes data from the various Sloan Consortium reports to display in graphic form the growth in online enrollments during the period of Fall 2002 through Fall of 2006. The increase from 1.6 million students to 3.5 million students represents a 118% increase over the span of just 5 academic years.

**Annual Number of Student Enrolled Nationally
in an Online Course 2002-2006**



There is no question that the demand for online course offerings has grown at an unprecedented rate, but why and will the demand continue to increase or have we reached a plateau. As you can see from the chart above, it is true that the number of student enrolling in online courses has slowed, with a growth rate of 9.7% for the Fall of 2006, down from a growth rate of 35% just the year before. Still with nearly “20 percent of all US higher education students taking at least one line course as of the Fall of 2006” (Allen & Seaman, 2007) the argument for a solid distance education program can easily be made.

So what is behind the dramatic increase in online education? One of main reasons behind the growth is the changing face of the average college student and the need for workers to train and re-train themselves for new positions to meet the demands of the constantly changing workplace. We will look more closely at the typical online student a little later in this paper, but

we must also acknowledge one of the other reasons behind the increased demand in online education, which is increased access to the Internet. If you look back at the growth in distance education you will see that many of the most significant increases have taken place in just the past 8 to 10 years. According to the article, *32 Trends Affecting Distance Education*, by “2002 83% of all [American] family households reportedly owned computers, and 78% of children live in a home where they or their parents have access to the Internet. That represents a 70-percent growth rate from 2000.” (Murray, 2003) College students are particularly connected through technology. According to the International Data Corporation, “over 90% of college students access the Internet, with 50% accessing the Web daily, and this is on a global scale. This increased access to and usage of technology does not refer only to the traditional aged college student with “133 million US adults or 66% of the adult population [having] Internet access.” (Rose, 2005) With such a large percentage of the population utilizing technology as a part of their daily lives it only makes sense that they would seek out opportunities for additional learning experiences via the ease and convenience of online.

The Growth in Online Education at the University of Southern Maine

The growth in online enrollments at USM has been tremendous and mirrors the national statistics quoted in the Sloan Consortium reports. If we look back to the 2002-03 Academic Year USM had 414 students enrolled in online courses. Just 5 years later, the 2006-07 data shows that student enrollments at have jumped to 1,996. That’s an increase of 382% over just 5 years. In terms of the number of courses offered, this area has shown a dramatic increase as well. During the 2002-03 Academic Year there were 17 courses being offered online by USM. Again, just 5 years later the number of courses being offered jumped to 122. That’s an increase of 618%. In

the Fall of 2002 USM offered 7 online courses, 71% of those courses were at the undergrad level and 29 % were at the graduate level. In the Fall of 2006 the number of online courses offered by USM had jumped to 26, with 27% at the undergraduate level and the remaining 73% at the graduate level. USM's growth in online education during the 5-year period from 2002-03 to 2006-07 has been primarily in the area of graduate education with the majority of the online courses being offered by the College of Education and Human Development and a good number of courses also being offered by the Muskie School of Public Service. During this same 5 year time period the number of undergraduate courses has remained fairly consistent varying from 4 to 8 per semester. However, in the Spring of 2007 USM's undergraduate online offerings jumped to double digits where they have remained to the present date with 25 currently running during this Spring 2008 semester.

It is important to note that online courses first began at USM in the Spring of 1999 with one online section of a graduate nursing course. This is prior to the development of USM's Center for Technology Enhanced Learning when all distance offerings were facilitated through USM's Office of Distance Education. One of the interesting things to note about USM's online offerings is the lack of course cancellations. In the first few semesters, Spring of 1999 through fall of 2001 records document an occasional cancellation. However, from Spring 2002 through to the present day the data shows that not one single class was cancelled and enrollments in all sections were strong. Since specific reasons for the few early cancellations were not available to this researcher, it is worth considering that they may have been cancelled due to reasons other than low enrollment such as instructor commitments, etc. However, beyond Spring 2002 every class that has been offered has run with a solid enrollment, which seems to provide adequate proof that the demand for online courses at USM is keeping pace with the national statistics.

Meeting the Needs of Online Students

So what is the primary factor driving this growth in online education, or should I say whom? One of the major reasons for such tremendous growth is the changing demographics of the college population. “The traditional college age student who attends full time and lives on campus ... make[s] up less than 20 percent of the current college age student[s].” (Levin & Sun, 2002). ”In fact, non-traditional students – of which working adults compose the vast majority – have been the fastest growing demographic segment in postsecondary education across the last decade, and it is this segment of the population that is driving growth in distance-learning programs.” (Gallagher and Newman, 2002) “Online students are becoming an entirely new subpopulation of higher-education learners. They are ‘generally older, have completed more college credit hours and more degree programs, and have a higher all-college GPA than their traditional counterparts.’ ”(Diaz, 2002. Much like USM’s student population whose average age is 27 years old for undergraduates and 37 years of for graduate students (USM Registrar’s Office) many students see college as only one part of a very full life that often includes a full or part time job, family and other external responsibilities. “For many of these non-traditional students college is viewed as a way to gain new skills and advance their careers.” (Gallagher & Newman, 2002) These busy students are often seeking a way to reach a specific goal so they are looking less at the amenities of the institution and more at issues such as quality, convenience and flexibility.

These older adult learners who seek out online courses “tend to be practical problem solvers. Their life experiences make them autonomous, self-directed, and goal- and relevancy-oriented – they need to know the rationale for what they are learning. They are motivated by

professional advancement, external expectations, the need to better serve others, social relationships, escape or stimulation, and pure interest in the subject. Their demands include time and scheduling, money, and long-term commitment constraints.” (Howell, S.L., Williams, P.B. & Lindsay, N.K., 2003)

“The bottom line is that today’s older adult students are bringing their consumer attitudes to higher education. They seek four things from their colleges – convenience, service, high quality and low cost. They will not pay for activities and services they do not use, for hiring faculty to offer elective courses that they will not take, for buildings such as a chapel or student union that they will not frequent. They are asking for a stripped-down version of higher education, absent the extras.” (Levine & Sun, 2002) This makes the older, non-traditional student a perfect candidate for the convenience of distance education and because they are becoming the primary consumers of college courses the need for distance education will only continue to increase.

It is also worth noting while adult learners represent a large percentage of online learners and most often the target audience Echo Boomers, also known as the Millennial Generation play a role in the success of distance education as well. This generation born between 1980 and 1994 are currently enrolled in our institutions and their numbers will increase in years to come. These students are tech-savvy, multi-taskers and goal oriented. They grew up with technology and incorporate it into all aspects of their life including maintaining social networks via online avenues such as Facebook and MySpace. Students in this generation want flexible options that allow them to maintain the work/life balance that they value so deeply and they enjoy the process of learning. This generation, which has grown up with technology expects that educational opportunities will be available to them through the convenience of online and that sufficient

opportunities will exist to allow them reach their specific goals. That also means that often they are not tied to one specific institution but will seek out what they need from several different resources if necessary in order to achieve their desired outcome. Much like the adult learners we discussed above this generation has other responsibilities outside of school, such as work, family, volunteer service, etc. which means that they value the flexibility that online education provides. However, it is also important to note that this Echo Boomer generation highly values the process of working as a group and the social opportunities provided by the traditional in classroom setting so many will still seek out face to face courses which suggest an excellent opportunity for majors and programs which included a blended learning component.

The Important Role of Faculty in Online Education

The changing demographics of higher education students has lead to an increased desire for online options that allow students to complete their academic programs in an efficient and convenient manner. As the demand for online courses has grown and as institutions have expanded their online programs to meet student needs the demand for faculty wiling to teach online has also increased. For many higher education institutions motivating faculty to teach online has proven to be one of the most difficult challenges associated with expanding online offerings. “College administrators increasingly put pressure on faculty to participate in distance learning and other technology related endeavors. Most faculty, however, have not responded as quickly and enthusiastically as administrators would like.” (Bower, 2001). At many institutions the move toward a greater online presence has begun as an administrative decision using a build it and they will teach methodology. However, it is clear that the success of an institution’s online

program relies heavily on the commitment of its faculty and greater involvement throughout the development phase often insures a higher probability for successful faculty participation.

My initial research has shown that the method for securing faculty involvement varies widely by institution from requiring that at least one course per semester per faculty member be taught via an online format while other institutions allow faculty the ability to pursue the online option at their own pace. Requiring that existing faculty teach online can be an insurmountable challenge due in part to barriers posed by union contracts, as well as the fact that many faculty are resistant to change. There are numerous reasons why faculty resist the move to teaching online, but one thing is certain. Faculty are key to the success of an institutions distance education program. The old adage that you lure more flies with honey than vinegar seems to suggest the best approach for attracting faculty to the realm of online instruction. By including faculty in discussions about the future of online, connecting them with their peers who are already teaching online and providing adequate support faculty are more likely to be open to the idea of teaching online. And greater buy-in from faculty can only help to ensure a greater level of institutional success.

In order to consider steps for moving forward we must first understand why faculty are reluctant to teach online. Later in this paper we will examine in greater detail the most common barriers and disincentives as determined through literary review and individual interviews with USM faculty and administrators. But just as a brief introduction to the topic consider the following list of main concerns that appear to weigh most heavy on the minds of traditional full time faculty as described in an article titled *E-Learning at a Crossroad*. Among the faculty's principal concerns are "perceived loss of productive time for other academic pursuits, added work load for preparing distance courses, insufficient development time, lack of technical

support, lower opportunity for gaining tenure and many more.” (Ruth, Sammons & Poulin, 2007)

The Slowly Changing Landscape

According to the 2006 Sloan-C Publication titled *Making the Grade* “the issue of faculty acceptance of online has been an important issue for academic leaders from the first survey” (Allen & Seaman, 2006) published in 2003. Unfortunately there has been little change in the perceived level of acceptance during this time period. As of 2006 only “one-in-four academic leaders (27.6%) believe that their faculty accept the value and legitimacy of online education. This is in contrast to an acceptance rate of 27.6% in 2003 and 31 % in 2005.” (Allen & Seaman, 2006.

While the acceptance of online has been slow especially amount faculty, not all faculty are resting the move to online, some are drawn to the intrinsic rewards offered by online education such as the opportunity to learn new technologies, teach on a more flexible schedule, reach students who are unable to attend a traditional in class session or even challenge themselves to teach in a new medium. Recent studies show that there are encouraging signs that faculty attitudes toward distance education are beginning to change. “Despite some resistance, the results of a four-year study by McGraw-Hill showed a strong increase in overall faculty support for technology in education, with only 22% viewing it as important in 1999 and 57% [viewing it as important] in 2003.” (Howell, Williams & Lindsay, 2003) However, in a study completed in 2001 at Western Kentucky University they discovered that even though “faculty survey respondents had a positive attitude toward distance education as a general concept, [they] were less enthusiastic about personal involvement.” (Wilson, 2001) Institutions who wish to expand their online offerings must be able to successfully transition that belief by faculty in the

value of technology into an actual online experience as research suggests that experience with online breeds acceptance. Once a faculty member teaches his or her first online course they become much more comfortable with issues of quality, academic rigor and gain a better understanding for the type of interactions that happen between the students and the instructor. This rings true with USM faculty as well. Upon reviewing the roster of courses and teachers for the past several academic years I found that the majority of faculty returned to the online classroom after completing the experience. It was rare to encounter a faculty member who taught only one online course and stopped. This is not the case for part-timers whose pattern showed more of ebb and flows, most likely based on departmental needs and instructor availability rather than individual experiences with the online medium. An article published in *The Chronicle for Higher Education* confirms this theory stating, “72% of those who had taught distance-learning courses were favorable, compared with 51% who had not taught at a distance.” (Carr, 2000)

USM Dean of the College of Education and Human Development, Dr. Betty Lou Whitford noted that among the faculty in her college some were “nervous about quality and expressed some concerns about the loss of face to face contact, but found that [they] often got to know the students even better in their online courses [due in part to the] richness of the conversations which took place online.” (Whitford, 2007) Throughout my interviews it was common to hear faculty comment on how the online mode of curricular delivery has allowed them to develop more personal relationships with individual students and break down some of the barriers found in a face-to-face course. Dr. Thomas Parchman, Associate Professor of Music noted that his most positive aspect of teaching online has been that “discussions are equal and regardless of whether a student is shy or assertive everybody contributes.” Dr. Parchman also added that in an online course “students have a feeling of being protected so they often share more which gives

the instructor an opportunity to really get to know them.” (Parchman, 2007) For faculty who are willing to try the online mode of curricular delivery the results are often quite positive and many that I spoke with were pleased with the interactions they had with their students and the quality of the work that students submitted. Much of the published research corroborates that once faculty try teaching an online class they often find that any angst they had over course quality, academic rigor and the change in pedagogy are quickly dispelled. Now this is not to state that all online courses work perfectly the first time, or that all students are well prepared to take an online course, but in general the experience is a positive one for faculty, which often motivates them to stay involved with the online medium.

USM’s Commitment to Online Education

“For online education to continue its rapid growth, it must be perceived as important by the Chief Academic Officers who are planning tomorrow’s educational offerings.” (Allen & Seaman, 2006) In their survey *Making the Grade* the Sloan Corporation asked Chief Academic Officers to rate their level of agreement with the statement that “online education is critical to the long-term strategy of their school.” (Allen and Seaman, 2006) The numbers grew slowly during the period of 2003 to 2006, with 58.4% agreeing in 2006 that online education was critical to their intuitions long-term strategy. This is in contrast to 48.8% agreement in 2003. Unless an institution is committed to the concept of online education it is difficult to encourage staff and faculty to embrace its value. We noted earlier that many online educational programs began as an administrative decision with a build it and they will teach mantra. While this method may not always be the most successful for attracting faculty, research has shown, and my interviews have confirmed that institutional support for online education is a key indicator of the of the programs potential level of success. Faculty feel strongly that online education must be valued by their

institution and its administrators in order for faculty to value it as well. Faculty are less likely to make the commitment to teaching online if their institution is not supportive of that endeavor and do not view distance education as important to the institution's overall mission.

USM has clearly committed itself to the idea of offering online options that serve its students and the community. These commitments can be seen in various University of Southern Maine documents throughout the past several years. We begin with a document produced in 2001 titled *The USM Plan: Achieving National Recognition for Regional Excellence* “which described the goals and actions for the next five years – what we want to do and how we will do it – thereby setting a course for the University for at least the next decade.” (The USM Plan, 2001) This plan includes a set of 4 goals and corresponding action steps designed to move USM toward achieving regional academic excellence. Goal number 1 in the document states that USM must “Actively embrace and support a highly regarded and enduring community of intellectual inquiry and learning.” (The USM Plan, 2001) This goal considers the pedagogy of teaching and how the academic process can and should be tied to the changing community and workplace, the need for experiential learning and the idea of global citizenship. It encourages the University community to think more broadly about teaching methods, the specific nature of our student body, as well as the new set of competencies that students must have to succeed in the ever-changing global community. In order to achieve this one specific goal the Plan outlines 5 action steps. The final step labeled as Action 1.e. speaks specifically to the issue of technology and states that USM must “use technology in support of intellectual inquiry and learning.” (The USM Plan, 2001) And as a further subset of this action item the plan goes on to elaborate that USM must “exploit technology to expand learning opportunities and to enable learning for all students.” (The USM Plan, 2001) This goal certainly seems to suggest an understanding of how

technology could specifically benefit USM's student population and offers a commitment to providing opportunities that might not exist without online education or the use of technological advances.

Just a few years after developing the *The USM Plan* as a long term roadmap for the University of Southern Maine to reach its goal of regional excellence an additional document titled *Transforming USM 2004-2009* was created to "identif[y] the important work to be done for the next three to five years to accomplish these goals." (Transforming USM, 2004) Unveiled in the Fall of 2004, *Transforming USM* contained "five essential levers of change" designed to help achieve specific outcomes, which were tied to the broader USM Plan created in 2001. Each of the five areas of change again contained several action steps to help move toward the accomplishment of the larger goal. The very first lever of change detailed in the document was the need to "revitalize the curriculum." (Transforming USM, 2004) This specific task included steps for adjusting to the changing needs of USM's population and the surrounding community by "adding, downsizing, or suspending selected programs, based on student and regional needs." (Transforming USM, 2004) As recommendations were considered for this particular goal various factors were taken into account including student demand, academic value and the expected cost versus the perceived benefit of the program. Ultimately as part of this task to revitalize USM's curriculum Transforming USM declared the need to "establish an office of e-learning to facilitate growth of alternative pedagogies and outreach." The specific wording of this action suggests that USM has a solid understanding of the changing demographics of its student body and the recognizes the potential for of technology to allow USM to reach a broader audience, all while helping to serve the needs of the local community and regional work-force.

On September 1, 2006 then President Richard Pattenaude gave his annual Opening Breakfast Speech to USM faculty and staff. Done just prior to the start of each academic year this speech allows the opportunity for the President to speak to the current state of the institution, celebrate past successes, address challenges that lie in the year ahead and deliver information on any major changes the institution may see in the coming year. In his 2006 speech, the President addressed the issue of declining enrollments, decreasing tuition dollars and the potential impact on the University as a whole. In an effort to “control costs” and “restore enrollments” he also included 7 specific goals and corresponding actions one of which was to “increase on-line/distance education enrollments.” He further noted that in order to achieve that goal USM had “formed, through reorganization, the Center for Technology-Enhanced Education.” He went on to convey USM’s commitment to the concept of online education by stating “it is time to get aggressive in distance education. The University of Maine at Machias has more internet enrollment than USM.” (Pattenaude, 2006)

And indeed in 2006 USM established the Center for Technology Enhanced Learning or C-TEL in an effort to accomplish this specific goal and move forward with its effort to expand online offerings, thus reaching out to students unable to attend traditional in-class sessions and providing exciting new opportunities for the current student population. It is important to note that online courses began at USM actually began in Spring of 1999 long before the establishment of C-TEL under the auspice of Distance Education. However, the University’s commitment to developing such an office solidifies intuitional support for online education, which research has show is an important factor in a faculty members decision to teach online or not.

Most recently in February of 2008, the USM Board of Visitors released *A Southern Maine Imperative II*, a document designed to focus on the future vision for the University of

Southern Maine. This document was designed as a follow up to the first *Southern Maine Imperative* released in the year 2000. Through a series of interviews and focus groups with community and business leaders in Southern Maine the Board of Visitors re-visited the recommendations outlined in the first *Southern Maine Imperative* to gain an understanding of how much progress had been made and consider areas in need of additional development. Their results as outlined in the *Southern Maine Imperative II* reveal three key findings and a series of recommendations designed to help USM serve both its students and the surrounding community to the best of its ability. According to *Imperative 2000* one recommendation for USM was to “place the broad and continually changing needs of lifelong learners within the region at the core of the design and delivery of academic programs, develop a comprehensive network of institutional partnerships and collaborations, and make creative use of electronic learning opportunities for students.” (Imperative I, 2000) *Southern Maine Imperative 2008* documented that substantial progress had indeed been made in all of these areas and noted specifically that online headcounts and credit hours had increased significantly. Yet, the 2008 Imperative stated that USM should “continue the good progress in each of these areas, especially in expanding online education.” (Imperative II, 2008) The report goes on to elaborate that “in the area of online education, the University should build on current efforts within individual degree program area in financially prudent ways, both to expand opportunities for students and, where appropriate, to increase revenues.” (Imperative II, 2008)

So as we can see it is clear that USM is committed to the concept of online education and based on the *Southern Maine Imperative* documents, support for online also exists among the community at both the business and residential levels. So how does USM proceed? First we must consider the issue of faculty involvement and gain a better understanding of what motivates

or inhibits faculty from making the move to online. Only by knowing that can we begin to achieve the key component of faculty buy-in which will allow the University to consider various options for the future of its online offerings that will best serve its students, the community and the State of Maine.

Faculty Barriers to Teaching Online

Even as more faculty begin to accept the use of technology in teaching and consider the move to online there are still several barriers that may cause faculty to shy away from the actual process of teaching online. So why do faculty resist the move to online? The reasons are numerous and often specific to the individual and can range from concerns over quality, resistance to change, fear of technology, the amount of time that is required to teach online, concerns over intellectual property rights or the diminished face to face interaction with students. However, research has shown that there are a few key issues that continue to resonate with large segments of the faculty population. Interviews with USM administrators and faculty, both who have and have not taught online, produced results that are similar to much of the published research on this topic. In no particular order the three major barriers are 1) the amount of time – both perceived and real - that is required to teach online 2) the need for technical support and training and 3) a change in the pedagogy that accompanies teaching online. We will consider each issue individually as often they contain a sub-set of smaller issues as well.

1. The Amount of Time Required to Teach Online

It is clear that concerns over the amount of time it takes to prepare and teach an online course is one of the primary reasons that faculty shy away from the experience. In a 1998 study by Dr. Kristen Betts, “time was the primary inhibitor for respondents.” (Betts, 1998) Those interviewed for her study “emphasized the extra time required to prepare courses for distance

delivery, as well as the time it took to manage distance courses and to communicate with distance students.” (Betts, 1998) This issue is described over and over again in various studies and has been reiterated by USM faculty and administrators interviewed for this research paper. Because this issue represents such a major concern among a majority of faculty and is perceived as a primary barrier by a large number of University administrators a good deal of research has been conducted to further examine the issue.

In 1999/2000 a study was conducted at the University of Michigan-Dearborne to determine how much time it takes each week for a faculty member to teach one online course. This study did not take into account the number of hours needed to convert the class from an in-classroom format to an online course, rather it focused specifically on the amount “of time required to complete the following activities: 1) reading and responding to emails; 2) reading, participating in, and grading 10 online discussions; and 3) grading 15 assignments.” (Lazarus, 2003) It is worth noting that each of the classes that were studied contained 25 students and that the research did not study the amount of time needed to teach the same course using an in-classroom format. Ultimately “the data collected across the three courses were fairly consistent and indicated that teaching a course online requires between 3.5 hours and 7 hours per week.” (Lazarus, 2003). As noted in the research “the time commitment is within reasonable expectations, but unlike live courses that meet between 1 and 3 times per week, the instructor needs to be online and available to students each day.” (Lazarus, 2003) This represents one of the biggest challenges for faculty who are considering the move to teaching online. According to this survey while the time spent online each week was not unreasonable for a college level course, the change in structure to a daily commitment represents a significant barrier for many. To explain further, the common expectation that faculty members respond to student messages

several times daily meant that the uninterrupted time-spans that many faculty members view as necessary for research and professional writing no longer existed; rather they were “chopped up” into shorter and, in effect, less-productive spans of time. (Thompson, 2004) For many faculty the loss of these significant periods of time that can be set aside for research and writing may negatively impact the activities that are critical for tenure review and promotion.

“At most institutions, tenure is awarded by achieving the institutionally approved balance of teaching, research, and service. Time spent in developing distance learning courses is time not spent on other professional activities which may be needed to be successful in the tenure process.” (Bower, 2001) In her Ph.D. dissertation Dr. Betts also acknowledges “in academia, the traditional reward structure emphasizes research and publication, not technological innovation or participation in distance education. This emphasis on research and publication may actually discourage faculty who might otherwise be interested in distance education.” (Betts, 1998) During several of my interviews I raised the question as to whether teaching an online course should be considered in the tenure review process or if the commitment to teaching online takes away from other tenure activities. Most of the faculty and administrators that I interviewed felt that teaching online should not be singled out as credit toward tenure. However, there were a few who suggested that teaching online should factor more prominently into the tenure process. We’ll touch on this issue on more details later in this paper

In 2002-03 Dr. Joseph Cavanaugh of Wright State University did a side-by-side comparison on this issue of how much time is required to teach an online course versus the same course offered in an in-classroom setting. For the purposes of his research he studied two sections of an Introduction to Economics class. The online course had an enrollment of 15 while the in classroom section had an enrollment of 40. Several variables were measured such as the

amount of time spent teaching or working with students, the amount of time given to office hours, as well as the amount of time needed for course preparation. I believe that his results are best displayed in the following table, which was included in his published findings.

Table 1. Summary of Total Time Spent (Hrs.)

Summary of Total Time Spent (Hrs.)		
Activity	Online	In-class
Preparation	35	3
Teaching	73	27
Office Hours	44	32
Final Tasks	3	0
Total	155	62

(Cavanaugh, 2005)

As you can see, the amount of time required to teach an online course is more than double of what is required for an in-classroom section. Dr. Cavanaugh cites two primary reasons for the significantly higher amount of time-spent teaching the online version. First, “across all activities the longer time spent teaching in the online format was mostly due to the individualized attention that the instructor provided to the students.” (Cavanaugh, 2005). The second reason is related to the technological aspects of the course. “Specifically the online course required additional time to set-up, maintain, and complete final tasks.” (Cavanaugh, 2005) It is important to note that for the purposes of this study Dr. Cavanaugh used the same course taught by the same instructor to “eliminate the differences in teaching time that would arise from differing instructors or different courses.” (Cavanaugh, 2005) However, it is also important to remember that these numbers represent only a guide and that they may differ based on the content of the course or the specific set up of the online section.

All, but one of the USM faculty and administrators I interviewed raised concerns over the amount of time required to teach online and several faculty members suggested that it represents the biggest barrier for faculty who are considering teaching online. Dr. Michael Brady from the College of Education and Human Development emphasized that teaching online is “lots of work” and that in fact “teaching one online course is like teaching two regular in classroom sections.” Another USM faculty member who did not wish to be identified for this study echoed Dr. Brady’s statement by noting that the most negative aspect of teaching online is that it “requires way too much time” and went on to explain that time must be spent preparing the course, keeping materials current, searching online for resources, designing the site and responding to students. She further expressed her belief that the enormous time commitment required to teach an online course represents the biggest barrier to encouraging more faculty to teach online. I should note that most of the faculty who expressed concerns over the amount of time required to teach online still felt that the experience was still worthwhile and that they, and their students, benefited a great deal from having access to the online classroom.

2. Technical Support and Training

With an increasing demand for online course options the role of university faculty is undergoing a significant change. “After some years in the more familiar and comfortable role of content expert delivering lectures and dispensing assignments at the front of a classroom to a group of students assembled at a fixed time and place” (Beaudoin, 2002) faculty must now learn how to communicate these same goals and concepts to students via an online format. “The transition for faculty from face-to-face classroom teaching at a fixed time and place to asynchronous mentoring from a distance is being played out at hundreds of academic institutions

worldwide.” (Beaudoin,) For many faculty this transition to the online mode of curricular delivery can be an angst producing process due in large part to their fear of technology. “A 1998-99 national study of faculty conducted by UCLA’s Higher Education Research Institute (HERI) stated that two-thirds of college and university faculty find that keeping abreast of information technology stressful, rating information technology above research/publishing demands, teaching load, and the tenure/promotion as a significant stressor.” (Bower, 2001)

Several of the articles reviewed for this paper indicated that faculty clearly understand the value of technology as a learning tool and its ability to enhance course content. However, the wide array of available technology can be dizzying and often serves more as a barrier rather than an incentive. In 1999 Stephen Vodanovich and Chris Piotrowski of the University of West Florida conducted a survey about faculty attitudes toward technology at a medium-sized university in the Southeast by mailing a two-page survey to 250 faculty members in 24 disciplines.

Their “response rate of 34.8%” highlighted some interesting inconsistencies about faculty perceptions of technology versus the actual usage of technology. They found that “overall, 73.6% of the faculty, across disciplines, indicated a positive view of using the Internet for instructional purposes. Moreover, 69.4% believed that the Internet is an effective teaching tool. However, only about one-half (47%) of [the] sample currently use online didactic approaches to present material in their courses. This apparent inconsistency (positive view but sparse usage) is perhaps a reflection of the realization, on the part of the faculty that in an age of evolving technology, college and university instructors should adapt to the changing technologically sophisticated world by incorporating computer-based

techniques to extend and enhance instructional capabilities. At the same time, faculty may be confronted and struggling with their own lack of competence, confidence, and motivation to grasp and become proficient in online/computer based skills.” (Vodanovich and Piotrowski, 1999)

In her 1998 Ph.D. dissertation, Dr. Kristine Betts asked faculty to list what they viewed as the top five barriers that inhibit faculty from teaching online. Among faculty who were already teaching online, concerns over technical support and training rated number 1. Among faculty who had not yet taught online, technical concerns rated as number 2. It is important to note that the issue of technical concerns can encompass several issues including training on basic programs such as Blackboard, on-going technical support for both the faculty member as well as the student, not to mention incorporation of some of technological bells and whistles such as Elluminate, Camtasia or Pod Casts just to name a few. Over and over in various studies the issue of technological competence has continued to be stated as a barrier. “Despite all the positive assertions made about the impact that distance learning has upon classroom teaching, some faculty remain skeptical and can be overwhelmed by the knowledge and technical expertise required to deliver courses via distance.” (O’Quinn & Corry, 2002)

It is interesting to note that even though many faculty view technology as a primary barrier to teaching online, many of these same faculty actually have access to departments, staff and workshops that can help them gain technological proficiency yet they do not utilize these services. In a 1998 article titled *Concerns of Instructors Delivering Distance Learning via the WWW* Carol Wilson noted, “technical support and technical training ranked among the top five concerns. 65% of the instructors rated technical support a major problem despite the fact that

67% of the instructors reported having a department on campus to assist in the technical development of a web course.” (Wilson, 1998) Even though sufficient services may exist to assist the faculty member with their online course, her research has shown that a large number of faculty choose not to take advantage of the services. According to C-TEL Director, Ann Clarey this is not the trend at USM. Many faculty do in fact take advantage of the group training and individual assistance offered through the Center for Technology Enhanced Learning and often seek out additional assistance from their peers who have already taught online. The bottom line requirement, therefore, is to communicate to faculty members the idea that distance education courses are successful and that the institution’s training program can help them be successful distance teachers. (Levenburg and Major, 2000)

3. A Changing Pedagogy

Face-to-Face Teaching & Visual Cues:

Another commonly quoted reason for resisting the move to online education is the change in interpersonal relations. For USM Faculty member and Chair of the Communication and Media Studies Department, Dr. Russell Kivatsiky the “biggest barrier is the lack of face to face contact.” Although Dr. Kivatsiky is supportive of his department moving some of their courses online and while he recognizes the need to be responsive to USM’s student population he feels confident that online is not the right fit for him personally. “Online lacks a richness. It is a skeletal framework without the flesh.” (Kivatsiky, 2008) For some the transition to online may never be the right fit, while for others learning more about the online medium may help to ease their anxiety about the transition. College of Arts and Sciences Dean, Devinder Malhotra noted that “initially [he] believed that distance learning meant distance from learning.” (Malhotra, 2008) However, after learning more about this mode of curricular delivery he was

surprised to find the “online courses have the same learning outcome as face to face courses.” (Malhotra, 2008) His experience is not unusual. Much of the published research and my own interactions with USM faculty who already teach online confirm that in many instances faculty are able to establish more personal relationships with students via online medium than in the traditional classroom.

In addition to the loss of face-to- face contact, faculty who make the transition to online must also reconsider the role they play as instructor and the methodology involved. “The instructor must shift from the role of content provider to content facilitator, gain comfort and proficiency in using the Web as the primary teacher-student link, and learn to teach effectively without the visual control provided by direct eye contact.” (Smith, Ferguson & Caris, 2001) Faculty must rely on the written communication exchanged online to determine the student’s comprehension of the subject material. For many faculty personal interaction with students is one of the most gratifying aspects of teaching. An opportunity to see the spark of understanding begin to glow in the eyes of a student who has been struggling with a concept, to see confidence build, these are the “big payoffs” of teaching for many instructors. (Bowen, 2001) The 2000 *American Faculty Poll* confirmed this in its findings that one of the most important factors to faculty in their decision to pursue an academic career was the enjoyment of working with students. Many faculty fear this loss of face-to-face interaction with students and do not believe that any technological interface could provide a similar experience.

Loss of Community:

An additional concern about the pedagogy of online instruction is the loss of community among class participants. If the course is delivered totally in an asynchronous format students and/or faculty typically would not meet face to face. “While this format serves the purpose of

meeting the needs of the non-traditional learner in regard to delimiting issues of time and distance, and in many instances is a viable options, it leaves a ‘missing link’ in the learner curve for students because they lack the opportunity to benefit from the experience of structured dialogue, interaction with faculty and peers, and the sense of community that can be created in a traditional on-site classroom environment.” (Roberson and Klotz, 2002) Many of the USM faculty and administrators that I spoke with for this research reiterated their concern over the loss of community that comes with teaching in an online format. In an interview with USM Lewiston Auburn Dean, Marv Drucker he stated that his biggest concern about expanding online opportunities at USM was the potential that the LAC campus would “lose the culture of a community.” (Drucker, 2007) This sense of community is especially critical at a small, relatively self-contained campus like LAC where students are primarily from the surrounding area and the small student/faculty ratio provides increased opportunities for personal interaction and well-developed relationships. It is important to note that Dr. Drucker has not yet taught online, but has utilized blackboard as an additional class resource. However, he does agree with the statement that expanding online offerings should be a priority for USM in the next 5 years, which was asked of all interview participants. The intimate nature of the Lewiston Auburn Campus is part of the reason it is so highly regarded and receives positive reviews year after year so it important to consider how online options can provide opportunities for LAC without detracting from existing character of the campus. Dr Drucker also added that his “hope is that as we expand on-line instruction that we do so in a way that allows for community building. This might be accomplished through blended courses or other techniques that allow students to make connections with each other and with the instructor.” (Drucker, 2007)

Dr. Michael Brady, Professor of Education in the College of Education and Human Development when asked to describe any negative aspects of his online teaching experience, raised a similar concern. Dr Brady noted that there has been “some loss of community” in his online courses, and that it “remains challenging to replicate [that same sense of community] online.” (Brady, 2007) According to Dr. Zane L. Berge, “learning involves two types of interaction: interaction with content and interpersonal interaction (i.e., interaction with other people.” (Berge, 1995) This raises a new challenge for faculty who make the move to online, as they must rely on alternative methods to achieve a desired level of interaction between class participants and the instructor. A good deal of research has been published on how to achieve this goal and even USM’s own Community of Practice has been examining this idea by sharing best practices. However, online does require a faculty member to accept the differences in pedagogy and be willing to adapt both their course and their behavior so that the students have a positive experience with online, as well as successfully achieve the goals of the course.

Delivery of Content:

Along with the loss of face-to-face contact and the challenge of how to maintain a sense of community many faculty also struggle with the how to convert a traditional classroom course into one that will work well in the online classroom. “Faculty members tend initially to try to use their conventional classroom methods to teach at a distance and then become frustrated when attempts are unsuccessful.” (Howell, Williams & Lindsay) “Converting a traditional course to an online course is not simply a matter of typing lectures and posting them on the Internet. Instructors must discover new ways to engage the learners and encourage them to be active in the class instruction. For many, this is a major change from the way they were taught and trained to teach.” (Kosak, Manning, Dobson, Rogerson, Cotnam, Colaric & McFadden, 2004) While some

faculty are enthusiastic about the new challenge posed by converting a face-to-face class to an online format many faculty still view it as a major barrier to moving into the online realm. Not only do faculty need to achieve proficiency with the technology they also need to revamp the content of their classroom to work in an asynchronous or possibly synchronous format. In an online setting the role of the faculty member shifts and “they become more facilitators, intermediaries between the students and the resources they need for their own independent study.” (Bower, 2001) This change in roles represents a significant adjustment for many faculty and in addition to amending their teaching methods they must be able to revamp their course content to work in this type of online environment. Even with all of the technological support available to faculty as they transition to online the success or failure of the course falls solely on the instructor, after all “ technology does not teach students; effective teachers do.” (Whitesel, 1998)

Faculty Motivators for Teaching Online

Now that we have a better understanding of the major barriers that prevent faculty from teaching online, we must consider what motivates faculty to make the jump into the online classroom. In 2003 Dr. Angela Parker from Yavapai College in Arizona reviewed over one hundred articles about what motivates faculty to teach online. What Dr. Parker found in her analysis is very similar to what I have heard from USM faculty and administrators whom I interviewed for this research. Not surprisingly, Dr. Parker’s research confirmed “faculty generally teach in distance education programs for the same reasons (incentives) they teach traditional courses; for intrinsic rewards. The study identified self-satisfaction, flexible scheduling and wider audiences as intrinsic rewards and stipends, decreased workload, release

time and new technology as the extrinsic motivators.” (Parker, 2003) For many faculty the desire to teach is tied to the desire to help their students learn and by imparting their knowledge in an effort to help prepare the next generation to make their own contributions to the community and the world. Working in higher education is a noble profession that holds the potential to make a significant difference in the lives of our nations younger generations. All of the faculty that I spoke with certainly embraced that passion and the desire to make a difference. It is that same desire to make a positive contribution, especially among those who seek higher education but are limited or even prohibited from obtaining it by barriers such as distance and family responsibilities that often push faculty in the direction of online education.

For our purposes we will look primarily at the 3 major intrinsic incentives as identified both in a review of the literary resources utilized for this paper, and as collaborated by my interviews with USM faculty and administrators. These top intrinsic incentives are, in no particular order 1) the desire to serve students well, 2) a change in the pedagogy of teaching online and 3) self-satisfaction. We will also consider briefly the top three requested extrinsic rewards of 1) financial stipends, 2) reduced class loads and 3) release time for course development.

Intrinsic Motivators:

1. Serving Students Well

A great deal of the literature supports the opinion that among faculty intrinsic motivators are stronger than extrinsic motivators when it comes to making the decision to teach online. One of the reasons most frequently documented in the literature and repeated in my interviews with USM faculty was the desire to serve students well. Most faculty go into the profession of teaching in order to make a difference in people’s lives, to help them better themselves and provide them with the skills they need to achieve their own goals. These personal

motivators are no different among faculty who teach face-to-face or faculty who teach online. By teaching online faculty are able to provide educational opportunities to students who might otherwise not have access to a brick and mortar institution. “Many faculty members were committed to their institution’s outreach mission; they found it gratifying to provide access to students who otherwise might not have had the opportunity to further their education.” (Wolcott and Betts, 1999) This data is confirmed by a survey conducted at the State University of West Georgia, in which the researchers sampled faculty about their attitudes towards distance education. The survey was distributed to 283 faculty members with online teaching experience and returned by 118. The results of the survey documented that the number one motivating factor, chosen by 87% of survey participants was the “ability to reach new audience that cannot attend class on campus.” (___, Faculty Attitudes)

According to Frank Mavadas from the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation, “73 percent [of universities] agree online education reaches students not served by face-to-face programs.” (ItsaSurvey.com, 2002). For many faculty this statistic represents one of the primary reasons they opt to teach online. Teachers want to teach. They want to impart their knowledge on to those who desire it, not just those who are able to come to their classroom. When asked to describe the primary factors that motivate faculty to teach online, USM Dean of the College of Education and Human Development, Betty Lou Whitford answered, “wanting to serve students.” In discussing the CEHD’s online teacher education program Dean Whitford elaborated on this point by saying, “the move to online is really about serving the students well. The overall goal for us is better teachers. We’re proud of what we do and we want people to know what we know.” (Whitford, 2007) The USM College of Education and Human Development has made significant strides in moving many of its courses and in some cases programs to online. Under the guidance of their

Dean who also serves on the C-TEL advisory committee they are utilizing the opportunities available via the online mode of curricular delivery to reach as many potential teachers as possible and offer their quality programs to interested and qualified candidates regardless of barriers such as distance and personal commitments.

In an article titled “From Campus to Cyberspace” the author notes that “New England represents a market place that is especially well suited for distance learning activities. With a large land area, many small rural communities, difficult driving conditions over long winter months, the lack of a well developed community-college system in some states, and many technical colleges filled to capacity, there is urgent need for increased access to post secondary education.” (Beaudoin, 2002) It is true that Maine struggles with several of these issues and in order to continue to serve our students well throughout the state and beyond we, as an institution and as a state, need to consider the various possibilities offered by online education. However, it is also worth noting that the issue of access to high speed reliable internet service was also raised by several of the folks I interview and while USM may be fully committed to serving the surrounding community the broader issue of access to technology or lack thereof represents a major problem for the state.

2. A Changing Pedagogy

For some faculty the change in pedagogy offered by the move to online provides its own motivation. A move to the online medium might allow a faculty member the opportunity to offer a course topic outside of their traditional in-class offerings. Since online offers access to an expanded audience it dramatically increases the likelihood that the course, especially if new or outside of the required curriculum will achieve its required minimum enrollment. For some faculty the opportunity to totally revamp their traditional face-to-face course and to view the

material in a whole new light is appealing. “The Web environment presents a number of educational opportunities and advantages over traditional classes, such as many information resources that can be seamlessly integrated into the class.” (Smith, Ferguson & Caris, 2001) Several of the faculty I interviewed for this project noted their continuing interest in teaching and learning styles and by moving their course online it allowed them to undergo their own experience of learning and develop new methods of teaching their curriculum utilizing this new delivery mode. Dr. Thomas Parchman, from USM’s School of Music noted that his primary motivation for wanting to teach online was an “interest in teaching vs. learning styles” (Parchman, 2007) Another faculty member noted that in transitioning her face-to-face course to online she “enjoyed the experience of learning new technology, a new pedagogy and searching for resources online.”

Several faculty that I spoke with also mentioned the impact that the online medium has had on class discussions and how pleased they were with the quality of the content being shared by students. One faculty member noted that she “believes in the pedagogy of writing to think and writing to learn and that the process of learning online can help to clarify thoughts and produce a meaningful discussion.” This concept is confirmed in an article titled “Teaching Online vs. Face-To-Face” in which the authors state, “the emphasis on the written word encourages a deeper level of thinking in online classes.” (Smith, Ferguson & Caris, 2001) The article goes on to say that “the learning appears more profound as the discussions seemed both broader and deeper. The students are more willing to engage both their peers and professor more actively.” (Smith, Ferguson & Caris, 2001)

As we heard from Dr. Parchman earlier in this paper the feeling of protection provided by the online medium allows the students to speak more freely and thus allows for more fruitful

discussions. Research by Smith, Fergus and Caris confirms this point. “This same feeling of anonymity creates some political differences, such as more equality between students and professor in an online class....the students and instructors communicate on a more equal footing where all of the power dynamics of the traditional face-to-face classroom are absent.” (Smith, Ferguson & Caris, 2001) Provost Mark Lapping noted that while initially hesitant about the changing pedagogy of online the data has proven that “quiet students really come alive in online. Inter-action between the student and the teacher is often increased in online courses and any pedagogy that promotes increased communication is exciting.” (Lapping, 2008) In terms of richer course discussions, Dr. Michael Brady mentioned that one of the most positive aspects of his online teaching experience has been the “geographic and cultural diversity” (Brady, 2007) in his online courses. With class participants from different geographical locations and students representing different ages, genders, socio-economic classes and life experiences it provides for a wide variety of views in the discussion process. This is one of the magical opportunities afforded by online education – an opportunity to share the classroom with the students from all over world and gain a wider appreciation for a broader range of opinions and experiences.

3. Self-Satisfaction

The third intrinsic motivator for faculty is the notion of self-satisfaction. It is important to note that the concept of self-satisfaction can mean different things to different people. Several of the issues we’ve already listed as intrinsic motivators fall under the heading of self-satisfaction. Among both the literature and the USM faculty who were interviewed for this project they noted that they achieved high levels of self-satisfaction by serving students well, by reaching a wider audience and by providing educational opportunities those who are unable to attend on campus classes due to location and/or life responsibilities. For others self-satisfaction

refers to successfully adapting to a new pedagogy or the deeper level of engagement achieved in their courses due to the online medium.

Self-satisfaction may also refer to the fulfillment that is achieved by learning how to utilize the latest in technology to keep students engaged and motivate them to learn new concepts and ideas. “Many faculty members accepted distance education as a personal challenge to improve their teaching and develop competence in using new delivery media and innovate techniques. Distance education held strong appeal for faculty who were intrigued by technology and motivated by the opportunity to learn to use and integrate telecommunications systems in their teaching. (Wolcott & Betts, 1999)

Self-satisfaction may also mean an appreciation for the flexibility offered by online courses. For some faculty the opportunity to teach from home or to work around their own schedule is equally appealing as it is to the students who sign up for online courses. One faculty member I spoke with for this project noted that she wanted to offer an online course, yet wanted to be able to work from home. Although the faculty must check in with their online classroom on a fairly regular basis to ensure that the course is successful, this can be done first thing in the morning, last thing at night, from their traditional campus office or from a hotel out of town. In a 2005 literary review L. Maguire states that according to a compilation of several published articles “teaching online provided optimal working conditions, as [faculty] were able to ‘teach’ at any time from any place.” (Maguire, 2005)

For faculty who are willing to make the leap to online education opportunities for achieving self-satisfaction abound. And for most faculty it is not just one of these motivators, but a combination of several that keep them engaged in online teaching. While the lure of a flexible schedule or the ability to grow their program through online may draw them in initially they soon

find that there are numerous benefits to teaching a class online that cannot be achieved in a traditional face-to-face setting.

Extrinsic Motivators:

The same surveys that were utilized to determine the top intrinsic motivators among faculty also sought to gauge what faculty viewed as the top extrinsic motivators. Not surprisingly many of the suggestions focused on the desire for additional financial compensation or a method for addressing the additional time required to prepare and teach an online course. We will cover these issues only briefly as they are self-explanatory. In no particular order the top three extrinsic motivators to encourage faculty participate in online were determined to be: 1) financial stipends, 2) reduced course loads and 3) release time for course development.

1. Financial Stipends

A 2000 survey by the “National Education Association (NEA) report[ed] that 63 percent of American’s college instructors develop and teach distance courses with no financial remuneration. The report goes on to state that even though development time is greatly increased in distance education, most colleges see that as a part of the standard faculty workload.” (Parker, 2003) Due to reductions in funding and increased costs for employee health benefits and utilities, most institutions are not able to provide any additional financial support for faculty who teach online. Feelings are mixed as to whether faculty should receive additional compensation for doing something that is really part of their job. If faculty are hired to educate students should compensation rates vary based on the medium used to teach? Among the USM administrators that I interviewed there was not significant support for paying faculty who teach online more than those who teach in the classroom. Dr. Hansen cautioned, “providing additional support for

teaching on line suggests that it is unusual and needs to be compensated.” (Hansen, 2008) He went on to elaborate that online “should be considered part of the regular teaching load” and that for any “future faculty hires, a willingness to teach online should be part of their contract.” (Hansen, 2008) While they did acknowledge that the Technology Grants available through CTEL have been helpful in drawing faculty into the realm of online they felt that the method utilized by a faculty member to teach the curriculum as outlined in their contract should not dictate the dollar value of their efforts. It is important to note that although they may not have been supportive of higher pay rates for online instructors they were not dismissive of the additional time and effort that goes into teaching online and felt that faculty should be recognized and commended for the efforts to reach out to new populations via the online medium. According to the study by Wolcott and Betts, “There was widespread agreement among those interviewed for the present study that compensation for outreach teaching including distance education was not adequate. However, in relation to motivation, faculty members were less interested in remuneration than in an acknowledgement of their effort.” (Wolcott and Betts, 1999) The reality is that for most institutions, and I would suggest that USM falls into this same category; additional dollars are just not available to compensate those who put the extra effort into teaching online.

2. Reduced Course Loads

“The literature points out that less rigorous workloads is the second most [requested] extrinsic reward but due to budget constraints, few colleges have responded to this request.” (Parker, 2003) “The NEA report indicated that 84 percent of today’s higher education faculty have similar teaching loads regardless of the delivery mechanisms.” (Parker, 2003) For many institutions the ability to offer online faculty a reduced course load is beyond their financial

capability. If they reduce a faculty members teaching load it often means that part of that load must be made up by another faculty member or more often by a part time instructor. Both scenarios represent a financial commitment that must be made by the institution, and one that they may be unable or unwilling to commit to. In some instances if a faculty member's semester load is reduced those courses are just not offered which can be detrimental to students following an academic plan.

3. Release Time for Course Development

“The third most popular incentive was that of release time for course development.” (Parker, 2003) As we have already seen the amount of time needed to develop and teach an online course can be as much as double the amount of time it takes to teach an in classroom section. At some institutions administrators are actually able to reduce a faculty member's course load yet others are offering a “one and a half double credit for teaching a distance education course.” (Wolcott and Betts, 1999) This takes into account the additional time and effort required by a faculty member to teach online yet it does not require the institutional to pay them an additional salary or honorarium. However, it does cost the institution if they must rely on other faculty or part timers to compensate for the reduction in the faculty members current course load. Provost Mark Lapping felt that at USM “release time is entirely possible and that it is perfectly logical to expect release time for faculty development. We already do that” (Lapping, 2008)

For some institutions release time is just not possible due to the lack of financial resources and the need to mainstream costs while providing sufficient educational options for its students. In many cases, “colleges nationwide are balking at release time and instead are providing teams of designers and technical support staff to assist with the development.” (Paker, 2003) However, there is not sufficient data to determine whether providing faculty with these

technical resources actually helps to reduce the amount of time it takes them to assemble a course. USM does offer numerous services to faculty to assist with the process of course development and employs staffs that are willing to help at various stages of the development process. However, a large percentage of the actual workload falls back onto the shoulders of the faculty member who must revise his or her curriculum, look for appropriate web resources and actually design the course via Blackboard.

For many intuitions, the olive branch to these three scenarios is being offered in the form of development grants. “ In lieu of salary, course development grants provided faulty members with funds to support the purchase of necessary equipment, develop instructional materials, and pay for other incidental associated with the development and implementation of a distance education course.” (Wolcott and Betts, 1999). USM has a similar program that is available to full and part time faculty teaching classes on or off campus. Faculty can apply for grants up to \$2500 that can be used to “enhance the educational experience of students through appropriate use of new and creative technology both in and out of the classroom.” (USM Faculty Technology Grant Application, 2008) Even with the current budget situation on the USM campus several of the administrators that I spoke with were hopeful that the technology grant program could continue at least for a few more years as they are encouraging faculty to think more broadly about the use of technology in their classrooms and in some cases providing he extra incentive faculty need to make the move into the world of online.

The Current State of Online Education at USM:

Based on the literature reviewed for this paper, USM has already done many things right and has positioned themselves well to move forward with the expansion of online offerings. USM deserves a pat on the back for establishing a separate Center for Technology Enhanced

Learning, for establishing a CTEL Advisory Council, for facilitating the on-going Communities of Practice and for developing ongoing approaches to thank and recognize faculty who are making contributions to online. All of these policies and on-going activities are continually mentioned in the research as ways to recruit and retain faculty to the world of online education.

In its publication “Quality on the Line,” the Institute for Higher Education Policy (IHEP) established twenty-four quality benchmarks for success in Internet distance education efforts.” (IHEP, 2000) “The four benchmarks specifically addressed to faculty issues are applicable to any distance education setting. The benchmarks support availability of and encouragement to use technical assistance in course development, assistance in transition to the new distance environment, and continued assistance and training through the progression of the course.” (Bower, 2001) Via the Center for Technology Enhanced Learning, the University of Southern Maine already has several of these support networks in place. USM through its collection of qualified staff and well developed services is already well ahead of the curve in terms of having in place the support faculty need to make the successful transition to online. CTEL and its staff offer a great deal of training, in both group settings and on an individualized basis for interested faculty. Among the various services available to USM faculty via C-TEL is a “5-week short course for faculty who are interested in teaching online” (CTEL website) “ The primary focus of this course is online pedagogy and course management.” It is designed to assist faculty members in moving their curriculum to an online environment with assignments that will actually move them closer to preparing their own online course. Plus there is ample opportunity to “test their ideas and get feedback from instructional design and development staff and their faculty colleagues.” (CTEL website) CTEL also has several staff members who are proficient and

available to assist faculty with many of the latest technologies that can enhance an online course including Elluminate, Pod casts, Camtasia and many more.

The University of Southern Maine is also fortunate to have a committed group of faculty and administrators who serve as the CTEL Advisory Council. Their specific role is outlined on the CTEL website and is as follows:

- Advises and directs the e-learning initiative at USM
- Anticipates and addresses problems and issues regarding online learning
- Helps foster quality in technology-enhanced learning
- Determines the best ways to “get ahead of the curve” with online learning
- Helps the Technology Steering Committee keep pace with the growth of online courses
- Advises CTEL on ways to enhance its value to the larger academic community
- Reviews faculty applications for online development awards (CTEL Website)

After speaking with several of the members of this group it is clear that they are extremely committed to the concept of advancing online education at USM while ensuring that it maintains a high level of academic quality. They are strong supporters of and advocates for the value of online education and many of the members continually offer their assistance and guidance to their peers who are just beginning to make the transition into the online medium. They understand the challenges that new online faculty face and can often serve as a valuable sounding board and/or mentor for faculty looking to transition into the online mode of curricular delivery.

As we have already discovered faculty are motivated more by intrinsic rewards than extrinsic rewards. For many faculty a simple acknowledgment by their peers and/or recognition by the University’s administration of their contributions to the institution is an important reward.

In an interview with USM faculty member Dr. Russell Kivatisky he noted that he “received an e-mail from Provost Mark Lapping thanking him and the Communication and Media Studies Department for taking the lead in online courses.” While a simple gesture, Dr. Kivatisky noted, “such personal thank-you’s are rare and mean a lot.” (Kivatisky, 2008) USM strives to recognize and thank faculty who teach online and provide opportunities for them to share their individual contributions with the educational community at large. In an effort to provide that opportunity for recognition, each year the USM’s Center for Technology Enhanced Learning facilitates a showcase to highlight technology in teaching and learning. Faculty members are invited to share with their peers and the broader university community through a series of lectures and hands-on training sessions their knowledge of and experience with teaching online. During this one-day conference various faculty members offer short presentations on how they are using the various aspects of technology in their own classes and some insight into their own experiences in the online classroom.

Research has shown that faculty value the ability to learn from their peers and that having access to such a forum is especially helpful in the relatively new world of online education. The University of Southern Maine is also very fortunate to have a faculty led Community of Practice. These gatherings take place in person but there is also the opportunity for faculty to join the discussion online via Elluminate. Topics range from how to increase discussion in online courses to how to develop that all-important sense of community in an online classroom. Knowledge of online varies among the participants, but it gives all a chance to share their own experiences and learn from other participants what works well, as well as what doesn’t work so well. These Community of Practice sessions are a tremendous asset to those who teach online or

may be considering a move to online and are just one of the many benefits that USM facilitates in an effort to support faculty in this new medium.

So as we've just learned USM has done an excellent job of positioning itself to move forward in the area of online education. USM has already established a broad base of supportive and knowledgeable staff, effective and efficient trainings, a solid core of administrators and peers who are involved at various levels and USM provides opportunities for faculty recognition which are all key to bringing new faculty online and maintaining support from existing faculty. It appears that USM and CTEL are doing a very good job of responding to the needs of its online faculty, as well as the needs of students and the broader community. But what does the future hold for online education at USM? How will we move forward in this area as an institution? What if anything is missing? What needs are unmet and what will USM need to achieve an even greater level of success in the area of online education. We will consider those issues next.

The Future of Online Education at USM:

Yes, USM is currently making solid strides in the area of online education with increases in both online offerings and student enrollments, but the potential for growth is enormous. It's important to remember that my research has focused primarily on the faculty side of online education with regard to why faculty teach online and what motivates them or inhibits them from teaching online so I can only speak to those issues as we look forward. But as we know, faculty are key to the success of any online program we need to now take what we've learned about faculty and their views of online and use it to make suggestions for ways to address some of the barriers, both actual and perceived, as well as suggest incentives that may provide the additional level of motivation that faculty may need to move toward the area of online.

In an article titled *What's In It For Me?* authors Wolcott and Betts do an excellent job of distilling much of the research in this area and turning it into four concise points that any institution should keep in mind when trying to encourage greater faculty participation in its online programming. They write:

To recruit and sustain motivated faculty, institutions must offer valued incentives, eliminate disincentives, and provide equitable rewards for distance teaching. Specifically, institutions should implement the following recommendations regarding incentives and rewards for participation in distance education programs:

- attend more to intrinsic rewards by providing a wider range of opportunities through which faculty can achieve personal satisfaction and professional growth;
- consider individual differences among faculty, recognizing that motivation is not the same for everyone and that it changes over time as faculty members progress in their careers;
- establish policies relating to workload, promotion, tenure, and merit that (a) fairly compensate faculty for work valued by the institution and (b) align external rewards with institutional values; and
- provide faculty development and instructional development programs to increase opportunities for formal and informal recognition, and provide training and other forms of institutional support for distance teaching. (Wolcott & Betts, 1999)

With these key 4 points in mind let us consider the barriers and incentives detailed above and think about how they might be addressed at the University of Southern Maine, as well as which issues represent the primary challenges for our institution. It's important to note that these

suggestions by no means represent final recommendations, but I believe that they provide a solid starting point for future discussions with C-TEL and the University as they move forward in a more planned expansion of online education.

1. A Formalized Policy for Online Learning

Dean Malhotra said it best when he stated “USM has not conveyed why it is important that as an institution we engage in online learning.” (Malhotra, 2008) He went on to clarify that “Online is important because the more we can keep students engaged the greater the chance that they will finish their degree. There is a very real danger that when there are gaps in their academic career they may not finish. If during this interim period they could utilize online to stay engaged there is a better chance that they will return to USM which could prove to be an important retention strategy.” (Malhotra, 2008)

Currently the University of Southern Maine does not have a formalized policy for the implementation and expansion of online learning. Within the past few years USM’s University Outreach Division, CTEL and its advisory committee developed a wish list of programs that they would like to see in a blended or online format, as well as a 3-year plan for the expansion of online offerings and related support infrastructure at USM. According to Associate Provost of University Outreach, Dr. Robert Hansen the “first phase of the plan was to build institutional capacity” in the area of online and the “second phase of the plan was to move degree and/or certificate programs online.” (Hansen, 2008) The first phase of the plan has definitely been successful as the number of online course offerings have grown tremendously over the past several years. Unfortunately the recent budget situation at the University has required that all departments and senior staff refocus their attention on budget issues, and that all other

initiatives be placed on hold. With a number of institutional changes ongoing and a new President due on campus later this year the stage is well set to consider the future of online at USM in a more methodical manner. Information gained through research such as my own, and from additional Muskie students who are studying other aspects of online education hopefully will prove useful as part of this process. I would suggest that the time is right for the University to develop an institutional strategic plan for online education at USM. While the existing plan was developed primarily in the area of University Outreach and with input from members of the CTEL advisory committee I would suggest a broader, more inclusive process that encourages participation by faculty and administrators who are not necessarily supportive of the idea of distance education. In theory a plan developed with input from those who are not already admirers of online may produce a more well rounded plan that addresses some of the barriers outlined in this paper. Remember that faculty buy in is key to the success of any online initiative and including them in the process early encourages the likelihood that they will be supportive. Dean Malhotra quoted a line from Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida* that I believe adds credence to this suggestion, "It is the purpose that makes strong the vow." If faculty understand the value of online, its contribution to access and its ability to keep students engaged they are more likely to be supportive of this mode of curricular delivery and the University's efforts to enhance and expand online offerings.

2. Faculty Assistance With Course Development

While USM already offers faculty a tremendous amount of support in learning the technologies needed to teach online and does offer some guidance in converting course content into an online format this is the one area where several faculty members acknowledged that additional assistance from USM would have been beneficial. In 2001, the National Education

Association published an update on the state of distance education that was a follow up to their broader survey on this same topic completed in the year 2000. The NEA held several focus groups with a total of 24 higher education faculty to gain additional insight into the survey they conducted just one year earlier. Among their focus group participants they found a “consensus around the importance of having support from a mentor faculty member who has an understanding of the content of the distance-learning members’ courses. A purely technical person was not nearly sufficient, since the support faculty members need requires a blend of technical expertise and understanding of the content.” (NEA Update, 2001) USM Faculty member, Dr. Thomas Parchman agreed that they “need someone in CTEL who has both the teaching and the technology experience, they should be faculty. They need to understand how to put a course online as well as the nature of the curriculum. Faculty want to hear this from faculty – from their peers.” (Parchman, 2007) Dr. Hansen concurred when asked if he felt there were any gaps that needed to be addressed in order to improve the services offered by CTEL or encourage greater faculty participation. “We need someone to address pedagogical and curricular issues.” (Hansen, 2008) He went on to elaborate that “when you are trying to encourage the movement of programs online, the involvement of a faculty member, who can work with other faculty as peer, would be extremely helpful.” (Hansen, 2008)

It should be noted that there are already some processes in place for faculty to obtain peer support during the process of putting a course online. Some faculty who already have experience online are mentoring those who are new to the process while others are available to answer questions and offer guidance. Also, the Community of Practice sessions are addressing some of these issues and allowing instructors with varying levels of online experience to come together

and discuss best practices. However, even with all of these avenues for assistance a more formalized process is suggested.

Suggestions include: An organized corps of faculty volunteers available to offer peer support, a faculty lead orientation that includes issues such as how to write a syllabus for an online course, tips for time management, advantages and disadvantages of teaching online or perhaps one faculty member dedicated to providing curricular assistance with transitioning courses online while also helping to address technological issues and their impact on the course pedagogy. More information on this recommendation will be provided once the faculty based focus group is held later this summer.

3. 24/7 Help Desk

Certainly there is the need for greater access to technical assistance and online services for students, but since my research dealt specifically with faculty needs I will try to keep from straying into those areas. With regard to needs of faculty, expanded hours of technical assistance would definitely be a tremendous help. Currently our institutional help desk provides technical assistance between the hours of 8 AM and 4:30 PM. Unfortunately technical issues do not always take place during normal work hours especially in the realm of online when most folks are online in the evening or early morning. Several faculty I interviewed for this research noted that extended hours for technical assistance would certainly be most useful. It is possible that the costs related to extending help desk hours for online students may be prohibitive, but if the institution is serious about making a commitment to expanding online they must also make a commitment to the institutional services that serve both faculty and students. In my interview with Dr. Hansen it was clear that this issue was already on the University's radar screen. He noted that "online courses assess a technology fee and as online courses grow so does the

revenue stream.” (Hansen, 2008) Dr. Hansen suggested that “some of these dollars could be allocated to IT” and is hopeful that in the near future “the University will be able to keep the help desk open until 9 or 10:00 PM.” (Hansen, 2008)

As an additional suggestion I would recommend that help desk hours be expanded significantly during the first few weeks of the semester as first time faculty and new students log on to their courses for the first time. Perhaps by tracking current help requests related to online courses the IT department could determine the most frequent problems encountered by faculty and students and when during the semester these difficulties typically happen. Then limited funds could be used to ramp up staffing during those time of most demand.

4. Fair Compensation for Work

I believe that this will be the most difficult issue to resolve in the effort to improve faculty participation in online education. I would also suggest that there may not be one answer that will appease all. Although very few faculty that I interviewed spoke directly to the issue of more money for teaching online or the desire for release time all of them mentioned the significant amount of time that is needed to create and teach an online course. There needs to be a recognition of the amount of time it takes to teach online and consider creative ways to compensate for the loss it creates in other areas of productivity such as research. What would faculty consider as fair compensation? What types of incentives can USM realistically offer especially in these difficult financial times? What should they have to offer? Are there ways to increase the intrinsic rewards that are more highly valued by most faculty?

Provost Mark Lapping did note that “accountability for all incentives is important. What happens when a faculty member receives a grant or release time for putting a course online and then they don’t.” (Lapping, 2008) This issue definitely suggests the need for a broader

discussion, again among University faculty and administrators, that leads to the development of incentives that address the issue of fair compensation for the additional work required to teach online.

There are two smaller issues that also fall under the heading of fair compensation for work that we should attend to. They are the issues of intellectual property rights and the role of online education in the University's tenure process. It is possible these issues are already well addressed through current University policies or that faculty and administrators may determine that no additional work is required on either. A few of the folks I interviewed suggested that their concerns were essentially as non-issues or they felt that we already had significant protections in place. However, since both issues have occurred quite frequently in my research and have been raised several times by USM faculty it seems important that we at least consider whether any additional action is needed or at the very minimum clarify the existing policies that address one or both of these concerns.

A. Address the Issue of Intellectual Property Rights

“Like textbooks, online instructional materials created for Web-based learning can be used and reused without the involvement of the teacher who originally created them. These materials have value separate and apart from the teacher's skill in teaching.” (Chmielewski, 2000) The ease of access to these materials has made the issue of intellectual property rights even more urgent. “So who owns the copyright to cyber materials? Under the federal copyright law, it's whomever the employer and employee designate as the owner. “ (Chmielewski, 2000) While many schools already have extensive policies on intellectual property rights often these policies do not account for e-courses. While faculty did express some concern at USM over this issue, several of the administrators I spoke with felt that existing documents offered sufficient

protections. The question is do the same rules that exist for the development, protection and ownership of in classroom materials adequately cover online course materials or are additional policies and protections needed.

B. The Consideration of Online Education in the University Tenure Process

As I noted earlier, the majority of the faculty and administrators I interviewed felt that online could easily fall into the existing tenure review process and that there was no need to establish any separate tenure criteria related to distance education. Many also felt that online should not be singled out for special consideration but rather should be considered as one component of the instructors overall review. More than others interviewed for this project Provost Mark Lapping felt that “work in online should be factored into the promotion and tenure process.” And while Provost Lapping did not suggest that online should be considered as a separate category in the process he did clarify that “there are already standards in the promotion process that can be related to online such as innovation and developmental work to improve your teaching.” (Lapping, 2008) The University of Southern Maine’s current criteria for tenure and ranks is included as Appendix D at the end of this document. While most felt that the current criteria allowed the opportunity to give credit for teaching online, Dr. Robert Hansen from University Outreach suggested the need to clarify in writing the value of online education and other forms of participation in fulfilling the University's access mission in the University’s tenure process. He stated that at “many institutions contributions to access are rewarded in the tenure process.” (Hansen, 2008). At our institution, “serving the access mission may be viewed as helpful [in the tenure process] but it is not formalized.” He further elaborated that the University’s existing “tenure process has not embraced online as a meaningful criterion” in achieving tenure. (Hansen, 2008)

This issue definitely suggests the need for a broader conversation among University faculty and the administration. As we already know the time that must be dedicated to teach online takes away from other activities that help faculty achieve tenure such as research or publishing. This may limit the pool of faculty who have the ability to teach online as tenure-track faculty at USM will need to commit the time outside of the classroom to other activities more relevant to the tenure process. If USM is committed to online education and wants to encourage faculty participation they must resolve this issue or at least clarify, in writing, the role that online will play in the tenure process, if at all. And they must, at the very least, understand the role that this issue will play in a faculty members decision to teach online, or not.

5. Addressing the Issue of Online Capacity

The issue was raised by several faculty members throughout this process, but was of specific concern for Dr. Kent Ryden, Director of American and New England Studies (ANES), who asked “how does online effect the issue of capacity?” The ANES program at USM is distinctive and unique and is viewed by CTEL and the institution as a good fit for online. With a large number of teachers in their program who are seeking a “master’s degree in a content area rather than a broad master’s degree in education” (Ryden, 2008) it seems logical that offering ANES via the online medium would allow USM the opportunity to increase enrollments. However, with only a small core of faculty in the ANES program the question remains as to how online would impact capacity. “Do we enlarge the teaching load for current faculty? Does it require extra compensation for the current faculty? Does it mean that we would have to hire more part timers?” (Ryden, 2008). This is a question for several departments as they ponder the move to online. Currently online courses have relatively small enrollment caps, which raises the

question, if we move courses to online in place of face-to-face courses how do we increase capacity. Replacing face to face with online does not necessarily provide more student slots. And how do we continue to serve the students who still prefer the face-to-face interaction of a small seminar class. Does the move to online mean that we must always offer both in order to increase capacity? Not necessarily says Dr. Robert Hansen who suggests that we “think creatively” in order to find ways to offer larger online sections if the course content will tolerate it. One creative possibility mentioned by Dr. Hansen suggested using graduate assistants much like in large sections of live courses where the faculty member does the majority of the teaching and graduate assistants facilitate smaller discussions and workgroups to help students digest the materials.

The views on this issue varied widely with some suggesting that it was a non-issue while one other faculty member who prefers to remain anonymous suggested that the University needs a “comprehensive policy on setting class size for online.” This issue suggests that it may be more than just a barrier that discourages faculty from teaching online, but it may also be a barrier that discourages academic programs from moving their courses online which certainly suggests the need for additional conversations and perhaps policies to address these concerns.

6. Ongoing Support for Faculty Already Online

So once we have faculty and programs online how do we keep them and how do we continue to meet their needs. The University’s Center for Technology Enhanced Learning is a good start as they continue to provide ongoing support and technical assistance, and their Advisory Committee continues to work to improve all aspects related to the online mode of curricular delivery.

The existing Community of Practices are also an enormous help in meeting the needs of faculty already online and providing them with the peer support that so many faculty feel is key to their success.

An additional suggestion includes offering technology grants geared to improving existing online courses. Even once a faculty member has their course up and running online he or she may want to improve the course by incorporating new technologies or adding additional bells and whistles. Often it is only after a faculty member has experience online personally do they begin to comprehend what's missing and what improvements could be made. By providing grants that allow existing online faculty to purchase new software, receive additional training, or fund the extra hours needed to make major modifications it suggests that the institution is supportive of an ongoing critique and examination of online offerings in order to ensure the highest level of academic rigor.

Conclusion:

“Contrary to intuition, current Web-based online college courses are not an alienating, mass-produced product. They are a labor-intensive, highly text-based, intellectually challenging forum, which elicits deeper thinking on the part of the students and which presents, for better or worse, more equality between instructor and student. Initial feelings of anonymity notwithstanding, over the course of the semester, one-to-one relationships may be emphasized more in online classes than in more traditional face-to-face settings.” (Smith, Ferguson & Caris, 2001)

Online education has much to offer the faculty, the students, the institution and the community. While teaching online certainly offers a new set of challenges the benefits are enormous. Let us take just a few moments to review what we have learned to date. The growth in

online has been enormous over the past several years and the evidence suggests that demand will only continue to increase, although not at such a tremendous rate. We have learned about the changing demographics of the typical college student and how well their needs are met via the medium of online education. We have also learned the role that is played by the current and upcoming college generation known as the Millennium Generation. We know that even though faculty understand the potential value that technology can add to their classroom many are still reluctant to incorporate technology and are hesitant to stray from existing face-to-face methods. We have learned the primary barriers that prohibit faculty from teaching online which are the amount of time required to teach online, angst over technology and some reluctance about the changing pedagogy. We have also learned that intrinsic rewards such as serving students well, the changing pedagogy and self-satisfaction are more important than the top extrinsic rewards such as additional pay, reduced course load and release time.

We have discovered that that the University of Southern Maine has done a good job in positioning itself to delve deeper into the world of online education. Over the past several years CTEL and University Outreach have done a great deal to increase capacity, and through the supportive staff in the CTEL office they have also done an excellent job of encouraging faculty to teach online and providing all the necessary training to be successful, as well as links to other university departments and services. During my research it was not uncommon to hear CTEL referred to as the one-stop shop for online. Throughout all of my interviews I heard only positive comments about the staff at CTEL as well as members of the CTEL Advisory Committee. They are highly regarded as being helpful, supportive and proficient in their fields. However, it was also common to hear that USM's existing online offerings are somewhat scattered and that greater effort needs to be put into providing a focus for online. Now that USM has increased the

number of online offerings significantly and helped numerous faculty members and administrators to gain a new understanding of and respect for online the more focused work of providing comprehensive online programs can begin. Through their dedication and hard work the folks at CTEL have established a core group of faculty and administrators who support online efforts at USM and are willing to share their experiences with others in order to enhance the University's mission of providing greater access to educational opportunities. The base is solidly set and the institution must now begin the process of deciding how to move forward, what the priorities will be and how best to serve their students and the community at large. As the program begins to grow in a more focused manner it is hoped that the information provided in this paper will be helpful in working with faculty to gain support and encourage greater participation.

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APPENDIX A: Questions for Faculty Who Have Taught Online

Faculty who have taught on line at USM

1. Describe how you came to offer an online course at USM? (Were you contacted by CTEL, did your Dean encourage it, were you motivated to reach out to CTEL)
2. Did you have any prior experience with online education before you began teaching online at USM? Examples: taking an online course, teaching online at another institution, using blackboard for a portion of your in classroom section.
3. What was **your** primary motivation for wanting to teach online?
4. Were you familiar with the technology needed to teach online? If no, did you receive sufficient guidance from CTEL on getting up to speed?
5. Describe the challenge of converting your in classroom content to online content.
 - a. Did you receive any assistance from CTEL with this task? If no, would it have been helpful?
6. What has been the most positive aspect of your online teaching experience?
7. What has been the most negative aspect of your online teaching experience?
8. Are there other services or levels of support that USM could have offered to make your online experience easier and/or more successful?
9. Do you believe that online education is critical to the long-term strategy of USM?
 - a. If no, why not?
 - b. If yes, where would you place it in terms of priority for USM (first tier, second, etc.?)
 - c. Would your answer be different if USM were not in the midst of a budget crisis?
10. What do you believe is the most important aspect of online education for USM and Maine?
11. If you could suggest an area for USM to focus its online efforts over the next 5 years what would you view as most important?
12. Is your belief that online courses cost the more, less or the same as in class offerings? Do they bring in the same, more or less revenue to USM?
13. Do you believe that expanding online offerings could help, hurt or have no impact on new enrollments at USM?

14. Do you believe that expanding online offerings could help, hurt or have no impact on retention at USM?
15. What do you believe are the biggest barriers to faculty teaching online? (Examples if needed)
16. What do you believe could be done to help motivate more faculty to teach online? (Examples if needed)
17. Do you feel that USM values faculty's participation in online education? Why or who not?
 - a. If USM considered the development and/or delivery of online courses as part of the tenure process do you believe that would make faculty more inclined to become involved with online education?
18. What is your perception of USM's online education program compared to other programs?
19. Do you believe that the quality of an online course is comparable to the quality of a course taught face to face?
20. Do you feel that online education has gained acceptance with potential employers as a valid academic program.
21. Do you have any other comments or concerns?

APPENDIX B: Questions for Faculty Who Have Not Taught Online

Faculty who have NOT taught on line at USM

1. Have you ever been approached about developing or teaching an online course at USM?
 - a. If YES, by whom? (CTEL, Dean, etc.)
 - b. If YES, what were your top three reasons for deciding against it?
 - c. If NO, would you teach online if you were asked? Why or why not?
2. Do you have any prior experience with online education such as taking an online course or teaching online at another institution?
3. Have you ever received any formal training or taken any workshops related to teaching online?
4. What do you believe are the top three factors that prevent USM faculty from teaching online? (Examples if needed)
5. Name three factors that you believe might motivate USM faculty to teach online?
6. What is your biggest concern or barrier that keeps **you** from teaching online?
7. What one factor would motivate **you** to consider teaching online?
8. Would you be more likely to consider teaching online if you knew that you would receive the necessary institutional support such as training on technology, help with adjusting your syllabus, etc.?
9. Would you be more likely to consider teaching a blended learning or hybrid course where a portion of the content is online yet there are still some in class meetings?
10. Do you believe that online education is critical to the long-term strategy of USM?
 - a. If no, why not?
 - b. If yes, where would you place it in terms of priority for USM (first tier, second, etc.?)
 - c. Would your answer be different if USM were not in the midst of a budget crisis?
11. What do you believe is the most important aspect of online education for USM and Maine?
12. If you could suggest an area for USM to focus its online efforts over the next 5 years what would you view as most important?

Examples below only if needed!!

 - a. Putting more undergraduate classes online
 - b. Offering more full degrees and/or certificate programs online

- c. New majors and/or degrees offered only online
 - d. Baccalaureate degree completion program online
13. Do you believe that expanding online offerings could help, hurt or have no impact on new enrollments at USM?
 14. Do you believe that expanding online offerings could help, hurt or have no impact on retention at USM?
 15. Is your belief that online courses cost the more, less or the same as in class offerings? Do they bring in the same, more or less revenue to USM?
 16. Do you feel that USM values faculty's participation in online education? Why or who not?
 - a. If USM considered the development and/or delivery of online courses as part of the tenure process do you believe that would make faculty more inclined to become involved with online education?
 17. What is your perception of USM's online education program compared to other programs?
 18. Do you believe that the quality of an online course is comparable to the quality of a course taught face to face?
 19. Do you feel that online education has gained acceptance with potential employers as a valid academic program.
 20. Do you have any other comments or concerns?

APPENDIX C: Questions for Administrators

ADMINISTRATOR QUESTIONS

PERSONAL EXPERIENCE WITH ONLINE COURSES

Have you ever taken an online course?

Have you ever taught an online course?

If yes, how would you characterize your experience? Best points? Worst?

If not, have you ever worked with someone who was developing an online course?

Would you teach online or develop an online course if asked?

Have you ever received any formal training for online ed (ask for details if yes - where, when etc.)

Have you heard anything positive about online courses at USM?
Anything Negative?

What is your perception of USM's online program vs. schools with larger online programs? (Quality programming, methodical about offerings, etc.)

DO YOU VALUE EXPANDING ONLINE OFFERINGS

Do you believe that expanding online offerings should be a priority for USM in the next 5 years?

Where would you rank expanding online education in terms of priority within USM's other goals (top priority, second tier, lower)?

Would your answer be different if USM were not in the midst of a budget crisis? If so, how would it change?

Do you believe that expanding online offerings will help, hurt or have no impact on new enrollments at USM? *

* Same question but use the issue of retention

Do you believe that online courses take enrollments away from regular in class offerings?

If you could suggest an area for where USM focuses its online efforts over the next 5 years what do you view as most important?

1. Putting more undergraduate classes online
2. Offering more graduate degrees completely online
3. New majors and/or degrees offered only online

4. A Baccalaureate online degree completion program
5. Developing more online graduate level certificates
6. Other?

Is experience in online education or support for online education being considered as USM searches for a new President? Should it be?

CONCERNS ABOUT ONLINE ED & BARRIERS

What is your biggest concern about expanding online offerings at USM?

- Examples:
1. Cost
 2. Maintaining quality of the class
 3. Ability of the students to succeed
 4. Declining enrollments in live classes
 5. Faculty who are reluctant to teach online
 6. Concerns over ownership of academic intellectual property
 7. Keeping up with the technology
 8. Other

Do you believe that offering an online course costs more, less or the same as an in-classroom offering?

Do you believe there are issues or barriers that are SO significant that they will HINDER/HALT the expansion of online education at USM

PERCEPTIONS ABOUT USM FACULTY

What do you believe are the top factors that prohibit faculty from teaching online?

- Examples if needed:
- Fear of technology, lack of skills
 - Extra time commitment
 - Issues over academic intellectual property
 - Change in interpersonal relationships
 - Time it takes away from "tenure" activities
 - Lack of \$ for course design, software, etc.
 - Lack of technical support

What do you believe are the top factors that motivate faculty to teach online?

- Examples:
- Ability to reach students who cannot attend classes on campus
 - Monetary Support
 - Increased flexibility in work hours and location
 - Greater flexibility for students
 - Desire to be more involved with technology
 - Opportunity to improve teaching
 - Professional prestige and status

- Intellectual challenge
- Credit toward tenure and promotion
- Opportunity to develop new ideas/ diversify course offerings
- Response to students asking for more online offerings
- Grants for materials and/or training
- Reduced teaching load
- Release time to develop online offerings

Would the institution be willing to support incentives that cost \$ such as reduced teaching load for online educators, stipends, money for technology/training and/or release time?

If the top faculty motivators turn out to have a financial cost, would you be supportive of the institution finding ways to fund some of these incentives or would you suggest that the institution find other non-\$ ways to entice faculty to teach on line?

What suggestions do you have for motivating faculty to teach online?

Do you believe that teaching an online course has a positive, negative or neutral impact on a faculty member's peer review evaluation? What about evaluations by administrators?

Do you view the development and delivery of online courses as creative work and scholarship for a faculty member that should be considered as part of reviews for tenure and post-tenure evaluations?

DEPARTMENT/COLLEGE SPECIFIC QUESTIONS

Please describe the online offerings offered through your school/college?

How many online courses are offered through your school/college?

How many faculty within your school/college are teaching online?

ENDING QUEREY

Do you have any other comments or concerns?

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN MAINE CRITERIA FOR TENURE AND RANKS

A. Tenure

Tenure shall be granted on the basis of professional achievement, potential for further achievement as well as the long range needs of the University. Evaluation of each faculty member should be based on performance in teaching, research and other creative activity, service to the University, and service to the community. The decision to grant tenure is the most important personnel decision. It is the University's recognition that the faculty member's demonstrated scholarly skills and interests, teaching ability and dedication, commitment to the University and those it serves justifies continuing appointment for as long as the faculty member competently meets professional responsibilities. Careful and full scrutiny of the faculty member's record must precede the department's decision to recommend tenure. Tenure is never to be viewed as a routine expectation of every faculty member who achieves or already holds the rank of assistant professor. Individuals on probationary appointments shall normally complete the full term, i.e., the sixth year, before the Board of Trustees awards tenure. Tenure shall not be awarded ordinarily below the associate professor level or its equivalent.

1. Long range considerations include areas of specialization within disciplines and program or department development.
2. All faculty members of USM will be evaluated for tenure on the basis of the following categories. Faculty members may not excel in all categories; however greater accomplishments are expected for those faculty granted tenure at higher ranks.
 - a) Evaluation of the faculty member's teaching contribution shall be the most important factor considered. The University teacher must be able to convey the importance and skills of the teacher's discipline to students, to organize and present the materials of the courses and conduct the courses in ways that achieve the teacher's objectives and stimulate students to intellectual development.
 - b) Clearly related to teaching ability is creative scholarly achievement, whether published or unpublished research, creative work, or new courses. The stimulating teacher is one who stays abreast of the teacher's field, masters new approaches to that field and contributes to the development of ideas in that field. The original scholar is more likely than the purely imitative one to be able to synthesize new trends in a discipline, integrate them with traditional theories, and present in a stimulating manner the result of the teacher's own thinking to the students.
 - c) A third significant area of faculty performance is service to the university, school and department. Effective and responsible faculty participation in

committee work, advising student organizations, and student counseling are all essential to the university's continuous and healthy development.

- d) A fourth area of performance is service to the community in a professional capacity such as: participation and leadership in professional associations, papers and speeches given in discipline subject materials to outside groups, participation in university sponsored public service programs, consulting and other work in the individual's field, and work in community projects in a professional capacity.

B. Promotion in Rank

For purposes of promotion and reappointment the criteria of A (above) shall be used as well as the following guidelines.

1. **Instructor:** An instructor should be adequately prepared to perform teaching assignments successfully. Normally the instructor should hold a master's degree and be actively working to increase mastery of a discipline, or should have comparable qualifications. Appointment at this rank will not be renewed unless the individual demonstrates qualities desired in professorial ranks. Continuous tenure will not be granted at the instructor rank.
2. **Assistant Professor:** An assistant professor must exhibit professional competence in teaching assignments and scholarship. The assistant professor should normally hold the highest earned degree traditional to the discipline or the program in which the individual teaches or be actively working to increase a mastery of the discipline, or should have comparable qualifications. The assistant professor must have a demonstrated interest in maintaining and improving professional competence.
3. **Associate Professor:** The associate professor must have thorough professional competence and must have demonstrated creative professional performance. Normally, the associate professor should hold the highest earned degree traditional to a discipline or program in which the individual teaches or should have comparable qualifications. This individual should be in the process of establishing a good reputation in teaching and scholarly endeavors.
4. **Professor:** The professor should except in unusual circumstances hold the highest earned degree traditional to a discipline. The professor must have demonstrated ability and scholarship of an exceptionally high order. As a teacher the professor should show an extraordinary ability to stimulate in students a genuine desire for scholarly work. The professor should have a reputation for making creative contributions to scholarship in a field. The professor's reputation among peers should be more than local and should enhance the reputation of the University.