Hartnell College Distance Education Plan

Philosophy

As demand has increased for online education, it is incumbent on Hartnell College to provide quality online instruction to students coupled with quality professional learning for professors.

To achieve this goal, the Distance Education Committee seeks the support of the District, the Academic Senate, and the Hartnell College Faculty Association (HCFA) for the allocation of time, space, and incentives that enable faculty to teach online. Therefore, the Distance Education Committee recommends the following:

Plan Objectives

The objectives of this plan are to:

- Create an infrastructure for online teaching and learning
- Ensure equitable online student support
- Create processes and standards for online instruction
- Build a culture of mentorship and support for faculty related to online instruction

There are three high-level areas related to distance education that will be addressed in this plan: Administration/Infrastructure, Student Services, and Faculty Support and Responsibilities.

Administration/Infrastructure

There are components and positions needed for a successful and sustainable distance education program at Hartnell College. This program should fall under the Vice President of Instruction (VPI). These are outlined below:

- **Distance Education Dean** - a Dean of distance education will have the oversight of online learning initiatives at Hartnell College. The Dean will track which professors have met the criteria to teach online and hybrid courses, and will act as a liaison to departmental deans for scheduling purposes, as well as Information and Technology Resources (ITR) for online technical support.
- **Support Staff** - the following positions support this work:
    - **Information Technology Resources Project Manager** - this position would handle the technical aspects of Canvas and technical training for faculty.
    - **Distance Education Coordinator, Lead Role (60% faculty reassigned time)** - this position provides overall coordination, planning, and compliance support for distance education, serves as the College's representative at CVC Consortium and DECO meetings, supports the Dean and faculty with DE policy and online

teaching standards, and coordinates the POCR team and the RSI training and certification process described in Article 22.D of the HCFA contract.
    - **Assistant Distance Education Coordinator, Faculty Support Role (40% faculty reassigned time)** - this position provides hands-on faculty support, including training in the pedagogy of teaching online, RSI and course design through workshops, mentoring, and peer support. The Faculty Support Coordinator supports all faculty, including those who are not completing the course review process.
    - **Instructional Designer, Full-time Staff** - this position (to be hired in Spring 2027) will work one-on-one with faculty on the design and development of online and hybrid courses, including alignment with the CVC Quality Course Design Rubric, UDL, and accessibility. The Instructional Designer (staff) will partner with the Distance Education Coordinator, the Instructional Designer (faculty), the POCR team and will be housed in the Professional Learning Center. Training in online pedagogy remains with the Distance Education Coordinators.
    - **Instructional Designer, Faculty Release (50% faculty reassigned time or equivalent)** - this position (to be hired in Spring 2027) will work one-on-one with faculty on the design and development of online and hybrid courses to include best pedagogical practices. The focus will be on alignment with the CVC Quality Course Design Rubric, UDL, and accessibility. The Instructional Designer will partner with the Distance Education Coordinators, the Instructional Designer (staff), the POCR team and will be housed in the Professional Learning Center.
    - **Certified Peer Online Course Review (POCR) Team** - these positions would support faculty with training, online teaching and learning mentorship, facilitation of course design, and course reviews–including regular and substantive interactions (RSI) and UDL/accessibility. These positions would specifically work one-on-one with faculty to complete course design and reviews. (Six are currently certified.) POCR team members who are also trained and certified in RSI may serve as peer evaluators for RSI certification (Article 22.D.1.d).
    - **Online Help Desk Support** - support is needed to serve students requiring help with Canvas or other technological issues. Aspects of this support currently exist in segmented areas including IT, the Computer Center on the main campus, and pilot DE Hubs at the King City and Soledad Centers. Will coordinate efforts for efficiency and more consistent support.
- **Professional Learning Center (PLC)** - the College has established a Professional Learning Center to provide distance education training and support. The PLC invites faculty to utilize online teaching and learning services, supports the RSI training course referenced in Article 22.E.3 of the HCFA contract, and houses the Distance Education Coordinators, the Instructional Designer, and POCR team activities as needed.
- **Student Support Services** - providing technical assistance, bandwidth, and equipment for students who need these services.

As the PLC grows, positions would be added or expanded as needed.

Student Services

To have an equitable, fully-functioning distance education program, the college must provide online students access to the same services as those provided to in-person students. Below is a list of the key programs that must have readily available online access for students. Most of these have some online offerings, but should be more robust and roughly equivalent to the in-person services.

- **Enrollments/Admissions & Records (A&R)** - students should be able to access all enrollment and Admissions & Records information and forms online without having to visit A&R on campus.
- **Financial Aid** - workshops, forms, and support for completing the forms should all be available online.
- **Student Onboarding/Orientation** - a more thorough component or module should be added to the onboarding process to specifically address online learning.
- **Online Counseling** - this currently exists, but processes and policies, as related to online counseling, should be reviewed to ensure that the services offered meet student needs.
- **Online Tutoring** - some online tutoring services are offered by the College, but it should be a complete program in order for students to get the same help online as in person.
- **Library** - many services are available online right now. Processes and services offered should be examined to optimize the offerings.
- **Bookstore/Textbooks** - some online services are already available. Verification should be made to ensure that students can view required instructional materials and supplies online including Open Educational Resources. Students should also be able to purchase everything online that they need for a course.
- **Online Help Desk for technical support** - students should be able to access technical support online and receive help to address their issues promptly.
- **Student Support Specialist** - access to a specialist for online students must be available.
- **Department of Supportive Programs & Services (DSPS)** - learning disability support, including accessible content, must be available for online students.

Faculty Support and Responsibilities

Standards and Best Practices

Online education includes both hybrid and online classes, as defined by Title 5 and Article 22.A of the 2025-2028 HCFA Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA). All distance education (DE) courses must include regular and substantive interaction (RSI) and meet accessibility requirements (Article 22.B.5 and 22.C), and class sizes for DE courses mirror those of face-to-face classes (Article 22.C.2).

Beginning Fall 2026, faculty who have not previously taught DE at Hartnell College must meet the following requirements before being assigned a hybrid or fully online course (Article 22.D and 22.E):

- **RSI certification, Part 1 (Training):** complete the RSI training course developed by the Distance Education Committee and supported by the Professional Learning Center, or submit an application for equivalency showing coursework or training from an accredited institution or @ONE (Article 22.D.1 and 22.E.3)
- **RSI certification, Part 2 (Certification):** complete an evaluation of a DE course using the RSI rubric, conducted by an administrator trained on RSI or by a peer faculty member trained and certified in RSI (Article 22.D.1)
- **Orientation to the college's learning management system**, before or during online course development (Article 22.D.2 and 22.E.2)

The Distance Education Committee also recommends that faculty new to DE complete training in accessibility standards and requirements, offered through the PLC.

During the first two semesters that a faculty member teaches DE at Hartnell College, DE may not exceed forty percent (40%) of the faculty member's workload (Article 22.E.4).

In accordance with the 2025-2028 HCFA Contract Article 22.D.3, faculty teaching DE courses "must also provide, at least once every three years during the evaluation process, current knowledge and use of tools, strategies, and best practices in online teaching." Evidence may include syllabi and course platforms, Flex activities with at least 6 hours of relevant professional development in online teaching, worksite observations, attendance at conferences related to online instruction, or industry seminars and training (Article 22.D.3.a-e). Faculty teaching DE courses may also be asked to submit documentation of RSI as part of the institution's quality review and accreditation process (Article 22.E.7).

Professors with prior online teaching experience at another institution may:

- Satisfy Part 1 by submitting an application for equivalency showing prior coursework or training; *and*
- Complete Part 2 through an RSI review of the course orientation and two weekly modules

All professors teaching online have the opportunity to participate in:

- Training in online standards and best practices offered through the Professional Learning Center, as determined through the shared governance process

Additionally, faculty whose online courses have been badged may receive a minimal review that specifically addresses Regular and Substantive Interaction (RSI).

The Distance Education Coordinators and/or certified Peer Online Course Review (POCR) team members will provide compliance support, verify completion of RSI training and certification, and

make recommendations to the Dean, or designee, regarding certification of faculty to teach online.

The Distance Education Committee recommends last-minute faculty assignments, or hiring of new faculty to teach a hybrid or fully online course, should be avoided to ensure that standards and best practices are met. Because Article 22.E.3 requires faculty who have never taught DE at Hartnell College to complete training before being assigned a DE or hybrid course, the previous one-semester exception for concurrent training no longer applies. Only the LMS orientation may be completed during online course development (Article 22.D.2).

Codification of language

The 2025-2028 HCFA contract codifies key elements of this plan in Article 22, including RSI training and certification for faculty new to DE at Hartnell College (22.D.1), LMS orientation (22.D.2), evidence of current knowledge of online teaching every three years (22.D.3), training supported by the Professional Learning Center (22.E.3), and scheduling priorities that recognize POCR-badged sections, OER and Zero Textbook Cost or low-cost materials, DE teaching experience, and DE professional development (22.G).

Other elements of the course training and review process outlined in this plan, such as accessibility training, the three-year course re-review, and the badging criterion for full-time online loads, remain recommended and non-binding. The Distance Education Committee will continue to work with the Academic Senate and the HCFA to address these elements in future negotiations.

Until such time as these elements are codified, the Distance Education Committee recommends that the District incentivize faculty to participate in the course review process and approved training.

Web-Enhanced Courses

It is recommended that all faculty utilize their LMS course shell for each of their fully face-to-face courses (referred to herein as web-enhancement). It is recommended that faculty use the LMS to distribute the course syllabus, take attendance, provide access to the assignment calendar and grades, and allow for communication through Announcements, Inbox, and Zoom (if needed), as well as access to available student services such as A&R, counseling, library, tutoring, and disabilities services.

Online Faculty Resources

Faculty wishing to teach hybrid or online courses will be provided with access to a course template. Faculty may choose to use any or all portions of the template, or may choose to design a course without the use of the template. Academic freedom will not be infringed when teaching any portion of a course online.

Through the Professional Learning Center, faculty will be provided with access to the Distance Education Coordinators, the Instructional Designers, certified POCR team members, District standards and best practices training, video content, and materials for:

- Web-enhancing a course
- Hybrid course design
- Fully online course design
- RSI and accessibility
- Quality badging a fully online course through the peer-review course design process

The Distance Education Committee recommends that the District commit funding to incentivize faculty to have courses reviewed, as follows:

- Faculty with a current hybrid or online course would be compensated to prepare for, and have a course reviewed by a Distance Education Coordinator, faculty instructional designer, or a certified POCR team member.
- Faculty working to "badge" a course for quality would be compensated to complete a full design of the course aligning it with the CVC Quality Course Design Rubric, with support from the faculty instructional designer.

Course Review Process

A checklist aligned with District standards and best practices, as well as the Equity Rubric, will be used to evaluate all non-badged online and hybrid courses. Courses will be reviewed by a Distance Education Coordinator, faculty instructional designer or a certified POCR team member. Faculty may request a course review at any time through the Professional Learning Center and reviews also take place as part of RSI certification (Article 22.D.1). A faculty member whose course does not pass will be referred to the PLC for requisite training and support from the Distance Education Coordinators and the faculty Instructional Designer.

It is recommended that courses be re-reviewed following the same process every three years, in alignment with the three-year professional development evidence requirement in Article 22.D.3, to ensure standards and best practices remain in place.

Full-Time Teaching Load Online

The increase in desire for online courses provides opportunities for some full-time faculty to work fully online. The Distance Education Committee recommends this to be an option for full-time professors. In order to meet these needs and address these challenges, the following criteria for teaching fully online is suggested:

- The faculty must complete badging of ***at least one*** of their fully online courses.
- Consistent with Article 22.G, administrators are encouraged to give scheduling consideration to POCR-badged course sections, along with OER and Zero Textbook Cost or low-cost materials, DE teaching experience, and DE professional development.
- It is recommended that full-time faculty also *actively* participate in shared governance.

- The District retains the right of assignment for DE courses, including the right to limit the percentage of DE load assigned to a faculty member (Article 22.E.4).
- Faculty teaching 100% online are encouraged to share office space in compliance with the Hartnell College Office policy.

Tenure/Faculty Observation Process

The current Faculty Observation process for online and hybrid courses lacks relevance with regard to the online aspects of the observation and review. Under Article 14 and Appendix C of the 2025-2028 CBA, a DE worksite observation covers one learning unit (roughly one week of material), and the same observation forms are used for all modalities, with "class" meaning the virtual classroom. Article 22.E.6 applies the same standards of quality for faculty evaluation to DE as to face-to-face instruction. The Committee recommends developing guidance, aligned with the standards and best practices set forth by the District and the RSI rubric, to help evaluators apply the existing forms to online courses; any changes to the forms themselves would need to be negotiated with the HCFA. The Equity Rubric can also be implemented in this process.

Peer Reviewers and Deans must be trained, through the Professional Learning Center, to evaluate online classes to ensure that they understand what to look for, as well as how to evaluate competency.

Distance Education Curriculum

In order to build standards and best practices in online teaching, the Distance Education Curriculum Addendum should be reviewed and updated to follow the Quality Course Design Rubric, emphasizing RSI. This project can be undertaken by the Distance Education Coordinators and the faculty Instructional Designer in conjunction with the Curriculum and Distance Education Committees.

Short-Term (8-Week) Distance Education Courses

The College is moving toward offering more courses in a short-term, 8-week format. Short-term courses can help students complete units sooner, balance work and family responsibilities, and focus on fewer courses at a time. Because an 8-week online or hybrid course covers the same content and learning outcomes as a 16-week course in half the time, it must be designed for that format rather than simply compressed. The Distance Education Committee recommends the following:

Course Design

- Short-term DE courses must follow the same course outline of record, student learning outcomes, and total hours of student work per unit as the full-term version of the course. Only the calendar changes.
- Courses moving from a 16-week to an 8-week format should be redesigned, not simply compressed. Modules should be consolidated, workload should be distributed evenly

across the eight weeks, and major assessments should be spaced so that students are not overloaded in any single week.
- The Instructional Designer and the Distance Education Coordinators will provide templates, pacing guides, and one-on-one consultation through the Professional Learning Center (PLC) for faculty converting courses to an 8-week format.
- A POCR-badged course that is converted to an 8-week format should receive a follow-up review to confirm that it continues to meet the CVC Quality Course Design Rubric.

Regular and Substantive Interaction

- Article 22.C.5 of the HCFA contract requires regular interaction on a predictable and scheduled basis "commensurate with the length of time and the amount of content in the course or competency." In an 8-week course, this means more frequent instructor contact than in a 16-week course, with interaction scheduled to match the faster pace. Standards for course length are currently declared in Professional Learning Center training regarding RSI.
- Faculty should set feedback turnaround times that fit the accelerated pace, since students have less time to apply feedback before the next assessment.
- Faculty should monitor student engagement closely from the first day and use early alerts, since a student who falls behind in an 8-week course has little time to catch up.

Student Readiness and Support

- Counseling and the online learning onboarding module should prepare students for the time commitment of an 8-week course, which is roughly double the weekly workload of the same course in a 16-week format.
- Student services, including tutoring, library, DSPS, and the online help desk, must be available for both the first and second 8-week sessions, including the start of the second session at mid-semester.
- Accommodations and accessible course materials must be in place on the first day of class.
- Admissions and Records, Financial Aid, and Counseling should review add, drop, withdrawal, and financial aid timelines to ensure they are clear and fair for students in short-term courses.

Faculty Considerations

- Faculty teaching in the 8-week format for the first time are encouraged to complete training in accelerated online course design, offered through the PLC.
- Scheduling, workload, notification of assignments, and compensation for converting courses to the 8-week format are working conditions under the HCFA contract, which does not currently address short-term DE courses. The Committee recommends that the District consult with the HCFA and the Academic Senate on these matters as the College expands short-term offerings.

Evaluation

- The College should track success, retention, and completion rates for 8-week DE courses, disaggregated by student group, and compare them with full-term DE and face-to-face sections of the same courses. The Committee will review this data as part of the annual Plan review to identify equity gaps and needed support.

Artificial Intelligence in Distance Education

Generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools are changing how students learn and how faculty design and teach courses. These tools raise questions about academic integrity, student privacy, accessibility, and equity that are especially important in online courses, where much of students' work happens outside of the classroom. The Distance Education Committee recommends the following principles and practices, which should be aligned with any College and Academic Senate policies on AI as they are adopted.

Faculty Autonomy and Course Policies

- Consistent with academic freedom, each faculty member determines whether and how students may use AI in their course.
- Every DE course should include a clear AI policy in the syllabus and in Canvas, stating which uses are permitted, which are not, and how students should disclose AI use. The PLC will provide sample syllabus statements that faculty may adapt.
- Assignment instructions should state the AI expectations for that assignment when they differ from the general course policy.

Academic Integrity and Assessment Design

- AI detection tools are not reliable enough to serve as the sole evidence of academic dishonesty and can produce false positives, particularly for English language learners. Concerns about AI misuse should be addressed through conversation with the student and the College's established academic integrity processes.
- Faculty members using AI for course preparation should declare any time AI-assisted materials or assignments are presented to students (see AI Transparency Addendum)
- The Distance Education Coordinators and the faculty Instructional Designer will support faculty in designing assessments that promote authentic learning, such as scaffolded assignments, connections to students' own experiences and communities, documentation of the work process, reflection, and multimedia or oral components.

Regular and Substantive Interaction

- AI tools may help faculty with tasks such as drafting announcements or organizing feedback, but they cannot replace the instructor's regular and substantive interaction with students. Distance education is defined by interaction between students and the instructor (Article 22.A), so AI-generated feedback, chatbots, and automated messages

do not count as instructor interaction on their own. Faculty should review and personalize any AI-assisted content before sharing it with students.

Privacy, Security, and Intellectual Property

- Faculty and staff should not enter student names, grades, or other personally identifiable information protected by FERPA into AI tools that the District has not approved for that purpose.
- The District, in consultation with Information and Technology Resources (ITR) and the Academic Senate, should identify AI tools approved for use with College data, including AI features within Canvas, and publish that list for faculty and students.
- Faculty course materials remain the intellectual property of the faculty member (Article 22.F) and should not be uploaded to AI tools by the District or others without the faculty member's permission.
- Faculty should avoid requiring students to create accounts with AI tools that collect personal data unless a District-approved, no-cost option is available.

Accessibility and Equity

- AI tools used in DE courses must meet the same accessibility requirements as other course materials (Article 22.C.6). AI-generated captions, alt text, transcripts, and summaries must be reviewed by the professor for accuracy before use.
- When students are required to use AI tools, the College should ensure that all students have equitable access to those tools at no cost.

Professional Learning

- The PLC will offer ongoing training on AI for faculty, including AI literacy, course policies, assignment design, ethical and responsible use, and District-approved tools. The Distance Education Coordinators and the faculty Instructional Designer will include AI in DE training and course design support.
- The College should provide AI literacy resources for students, including in the online learning onboarding module, so that students understand responsible use, the limits of AI tools, and differing course expectations.

Review

- Because AI tools and the rules governing them change quickly, the Committee will review this section each year as part of the annual Plan review.

This Plan will be reviewed yearly in the Spring semester, beginning Spring 2028.