UA Initiative for the Development of Online Programs

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Program Title: The Creation of a Cluster of Online Core Psychology Courses

Project Description
This project is a joint effort between UA main and UA South (UAS) Psychology faculty and graduate students to deliver five core Psychology courses online, making an online psychology minor possible. High quality demonstration courses will be created as templates for future online courses in Psychology and other departments.

What was accomplished?
Five online courses are in development and will be offered in the summer or fall of 2011. The courses are: PSYC 230 – Psychological Measurement and Statistics, PSYC 290 – Research Methods, PSYC/V 302 – Biological Psychology, PSYC/V 325 – Cognitive Psychology, and PSYC/V 489 – History of Psychology. Shared resources, such as online ‘Library Research for Psychology Students’ and similar d2l welcome pages have been developed. Each course includes content with mini-lectures, frequent assessments (such as quizzes, and short-writing assignments), and student-centered activities.

Goals
This creative project will serve as a model and springboard for future courses. Planned deliverable products include shared instructor resources, including course templates, summative and formative assessments, and “tricks” for delivery software. The proposed courses make possible distance delivery of an online minor, an important step towards offering an online degree. This project will also expand the psychology course offerings at 300-level for UAS. The selected courses also fulfill traditional degree requirements.

Assessment
A central assessment tool for formative feedback and summative assessment (not graded) provides a common assessment metric across the courses to enable comparisons. Three surveys have been created, using a central, de-identified database for weekly formative assessments, bi-semester formative assessments and a critical thinking summative assessment. The assessment will allow us to make adjustments as each course is piloted in 2011. In addition, we have developed an experimental paradigm to test the effectiveness of our online structure against the traditional in person delivery of the class. We hope to generalize this experimental paradigm for future comparisons to improve online instruction.

Future Plans
We hope to integrate these classes into a multi-center (University of Arizona, UA South, Cochise County and Pima Community College) online program that would allow the introductory psychology classes (Introduction to Psychology, Statistics, Research Methods and Research Methods Lab) to be offered entirely online and taught anywhere in the southern Arizona college system, for students anywhere in the world. The modular nature of these courses allows continuous improvements to be made easily in response to feedback from students and instructor experience. We are examining possible grant opportunities to build more courses, possibly for an online major.

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