E-learning Plan 2012-2015

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Executive Summary

While SUNY Plattsburgh intends to remain primarily a residential educational institution, e-learning will play a significant role in expanding opportunities for students. The strategic mission of e-learning, therefore, is to provide students with opportunities to enroll in courses leading to a college degree and make effective use of the advantages offered by e-learning technologies for teaching and learning.

For 2012-2015 the following primary actions are outlined for the areas covered by the plan. Other secondary actions and directions are detailed later in the full document.

1. **Strategic Research & Assessment**: Assess e-learning course and service quality indicators (without overlapping with traditional departmental faculty performance evaluation assessments).

2. **Policies**: Establish program and course quality assurance practices or policies.

3. **Course & Program Development, Program Support and Faculty Development**: Identify and promote the instructional advantages offered by different e-learning technologies among faculty. Schedule regular Moodle training sessions throughout the year, and collaborate with the Center for Teaching Excellence for continued faculty development after training. Work with interested departments, Deans and Associate Deans to identify and design potential certificate or non-credit programs. Compile and distribute policies and best-practice documents to facilitate certificate proposal review. Ensure that professional development includes pedagogy, technology, and academic integrity content optimized for e-learning.

4. **Faculty Support Services**: Promote faculty use of best practices for e-learning courses and programs. Maintain a set of locally approved e-learning best practices as recommended by TLTAG. Regularly inform the campus of nationally recommended best practices for faculty preparation, e-learning scheduling and class sizes. Develop or use existing campus incentive awards and rewards for excellent e-learning courses. Provide effective point of need support: Provide, assess and monitor e-learning faculty use of point of need support services (help desks, IT office hours, online support forums).

5. **Student Development**: Develop pre-e-learning selection and orientation services. Enhance the college e-learning web pages to include an emphasis on student support for routine course functions. Promote e-learning student participation in the cultural and social life of the campus. Explore virtual conferences and seminars for the student body. Provide resources to encourage and improve appropriate departmental use of e-learning technologies for faculty-student interactions.
6. **Student Support Services:** Strengthen broad academic student support services for e-learning. Investigate desktop videoconferencing for advisement and tutoring. Strengthen and expand e-learning library services. Strengthen and expand tutoring and accommodative and disability (SSS) e-learning services. Provide Web accessible guides for student use during a course.

7. **Staff & Infrastructure Development/Investment:** Establish support staff models that both maximize service use and service development. Consider national standards for support staff to faculty/student ratios as benchmarks and goals. Ensure staffing that includes both technology and pedagogy expertise. Continue to expand bandwidth & maintain standards for network security in order to encourage wider use of e-learning (especially by distance students) and to assure privacy and security of confidential academic information. Ensure ongoing maintenance and assessment of e-learning technologies such as course management systems and videoconferencing systems.

8. **Revenue Enhancement:** Enhance revenue generation through course and program offerings and videoconferencing facilities use fees. Assist campus planning efforts such as summer/winter review committees and the Provosts office in e-learning analysis. Facilitate development of new online certificate programs.

9. **Strategic Partnerships:** Explore the SUNY Learning Network (SLN) as a resource for server hosting, faculty development, student helpdesk services, desktop videoconferencing vendor.
E-learning Plan

E-learning can significantly help students complete their degrees by making courses more accessible, expanding the range of courses offered in the winter and summer, and giving students non-traditional learning experiences. It can also provide opportunities for new programs, including certificate programs. E-learning can and should promote the signature strengths of SUNY Plattsburgh: a strong commitment to teaching excellence, small class size, and active learning pedagogies. It can also help to develop an evolving selection of relevant courses and programs leading to success in professional careers or graduate programs. In addition to promoting academic success, e-learning courses and programs should also support student participation in the cultural and social life of the campus, where possible, and e-learning program design should include a focus on promoting student connections and a sense of community on campus as a hallmark of SUNY Plattsburgh.

This action plan identifies ways to develop and support e-learning, and is intended as a guide for how to deal with a range of issues, including: enrollments, accessibility, quality assurance, staff and infrastructure investment, marketing, and course and program assessment. It is comprehensive in scope, addressing all facets of the college. The Associate Dean of LIS will coordinate those goals and actions requiring collaborative work by multiple offices and divisions. The plan is divided into the following areas: Strategic Research & Assessment, Policies, Course & Program Development, Faculty Development, Faculty Support Services, Student Development, Student Support Services, Staff & Infrastructure Development/Investment, Revenue Enhancement, and Strategic Partnerships. In each case, the area is defined and goals outlined. This is followed by specific strategies or actions recommended for achieving those goals.

These strategies should be reviewed regularly as institutional circumstances change. Because new opportunities and issues will arise, even a short-term plan such as this should be reviewed as needed by the administration and faculty in order to update priorities. College operational units and departments with clear responsibility for Action Plan items should be given regular opportunity to review and suggest revisions.

Strategic Research & Assessment Goals:
The e-learning plan depends on concrete information about what faculty, staff and students need. Information about use, interest and satisfaction with current e-learning efforts provides essential information for developing and refining programs and services.

1. Assess e-learning course and service quality indicators (without overlapping with traditional departmental faculty performance evaluation assessments)
   a. Continue to administer e-learning student satisfaction surveys in every e-learning course section, with a focus on e-learning technology and course quality indicators
b. Conduct focus groups with students and faculty involved with e-learning courses

c. Assess faculty use, interest and satisfaction with e-learning programs and support services

d. Identify and utilize e-learning data included in existing campus reports, such as Branch Campus Student Surveys, student satisfaction reports, SUNY reports and other campus survey data

2. Assess the organizational structures coordinating the colleges’ e-learning activities

e. Assess the communications, goal management, and marketing effectiveness of e-learning initiatives

**Policies:**

E-learning policies are designed to follow approved campus policies. Campus policies may be officially amended to ensure e-learning course and program quality, authentic student success, or adherence to national standards or education law and regulations. Policies are also guided by the joint labor/management agreement, *An Agreement for Distance Learning Between SUNY Plattsburgh of New York and United University Professions*, which articulates accepted practices for course approvals, development, copyright, and faculty and student support.

1. Align practices with campus policies, or amend policies to reflect best practices for e-learning
   
a. Ensure that policies reflect the Joint Labor/Management Committee Distance Learning Agreement (the 1998 agreement as reviewed and updated with administrative guidelines in 2007)

2. Develop and publicize policies related to workload, compensation, course enrollment issues
   
a. The Associate Dean of LIS will maintain regular communication with the Policy Subcommittee of the Academic Council for policy recommendations
   
b. Distribute annual policy reminders and change updates to department chairs, center directors and Deans for effective administration.

3. Establish program and course quality assurance practices or policies
   
a. Continue monitoring of administrative enforcement of instructor e-learning qualifications documentation prior to e-learning course assignments
   
b. Recommend the inclusion of e-learning course and program issues through relevant questions in all campus assessment activities
   
c. Provide faculty with access to e-learning professional resources for policies and course procedures before scheduling the creation of course sites or course assignments for use of videoconferencing technologies
   
d. Recommend to the Deans e-learning enrollments that are that are cost effective and that make fair use of existing or available faculty resources.
   
e. Establish good channels for input into quality assurance policy recommendations by charging the Associate Dean of LIS to:
i. confer with TLTAG for ideas and assistance with drafting policy recommendations

ii. serve on appropriate campus committees such as Enrollment Management, Policy Subcommittee of the Academic Council, and Graduate Studies Council

iii. convene the Joint Labor/Management Committee on Distance Learning on a regular basis

**Course and Program Development Goals:**

Course and program development is centered within the departments and divisions of the college. Carefully planned course and program development ensures that students are able to reach their learning and graduation goals, and that the college is effectively deploying its resources. Once directions are set, however, e-learning might provide significant and creative programming opportunities in the following areas:

1. **Program Support**
   a. Identify and promote the instructional advantages offered by different e-learning technologies among faculty
   b. Schedule regular Moodle training sessions throughout the year, and collaborate with the Center for Teaching Excellence for continued faculty development after training.
   c. Promote the use of specific modules in Moodle (e.g., quizzes, discussion forums, live chat, etc.) to supplement traditional courses.
   d. Explore and promote uses of e-learning technologies for online discussions, individual and class journals, self-publication of new learning and photo-sharing
   e. Promote the use of on-line discussions, wikis, blogs, and desktop videoconferencing for specific use in seminar courses
   f. Consider the strategic and educational advantage of expanding e-learning into premier college programs, interdisciplinary programs and area studies such as the Honors Program, Canadian Studies, Latin American Studies, Woman’s Studies and Asian Studies.
   g. Continue to fund the “Online, Teleconference, or Hybrid Course Development Stipend” program to encourage e-learning course development
   h. Designate web enhanced courses in the college catalog, master schedules, and course web pages to promote informed course selection

2. **General Education**
   a. Expand the number of online General Education courses offered during Winter and Summer sessions
   b. Encourage existing on-line courses to seek General Education approval by providing assistance or a targeted stipend program
      i. Initiate conversations with faculty teaching Hybrid courses about possibilities of moving to a fully online format
ii. Provide targeted incentives for faculty to teach courses that meet under-served categories

3. Branch Campus
   i. Maintain the videoconferencing rooms at the Main Campus and the Branch Campus and continue to staff with technicians for instructor assistance
   ii. Expand the number of on-line courses that will support the Plattsburgh degree completion programs at the Branch Campus at Adirondack Community College

4. Certificate or non-credit e-learning
   i. Work with interested departments, Deans and Associate Deans to identify and design potential certificate or non-credit programs
   ii. Compile and distribute policies and best-practice documents to facilitate certificate proposal review

5. Fully on-line degree programs.
   i. Work with interested departments and Deans to identify programs with potential for strong e-learning enrollments
   ii. Ensure adequate seat accessibility through priority registration or linked course registration policies and practices

Faculty Development Goals:
College commitment to professional growth is long-standing and a valued activity within departments and divisions. In addition, the Agreement for Distance Learning Between SUNY Plattsburgh of New York and United University Professions requires the provision of professional development for e-learning as resources allow. E-learning is not the same as face-to-face learning. Faculty development support in the areas of e-learning pedagogy such as conceptualizing the online learning space, creating learning outcomes and their assessments and basic technology skill is a critical component of every high quality e-learning support program.

1. Enhance the scope and flexibility of e-learning professional development.
   a. Ensure that professional development includes pedagogy, technology, and academic integrity content optimized for e-learning
   b. Set and publish a professional development calendar a full year in advance that takes account of needs of adjuncts, variations of teaching schedule, ebb and flow of the academic semester and needs of Branch Campus faculty
   c. Communicate all professional development opportunities and options that we can provide or recommend on a regular basis
   d. Explore format variety in Moodle training, develop online FAQ’s and lead faculty to Moodle internal help guides more systematically
   e. Encourage Departments to make a model course available for colleagues
   f. Develop and schedule pedagogical and group management training for classroom videoconferencing
g. Provide access to a “challenge or proficiency” option for faculty interested in teaching on the Moodle Course Management System, so that experienced faculty could show their skill and be approved for online course assignments without attending Plattsburgh specific training

2. Integrate existing campus faculty development programs into the e-learning support program to extend additional on-campus resources to the e-learning environment.
   a. Work with TLTAG to integrate faculty development efforts in the following areas:
      i. Instructional Technology for development for Moodle and other academic software technological skill and e-learning pedagogy
      ii. The Center for Teaching Excellence for course structure, classroom management, and teaching skill for e-learning
      iii. The Center for Diversity, Pluralism, and Inclusion for e-learning curriculum inclusion of subject content and instructor readiness to engage students on issues of diversity
      iv. The Institute for Ethics in Public Life for development of resources and support of curriculum inclusion of issues of professional ethics and ethical questions in the e-learning environment
      v. Any other campus professional development programs as they become available

Faculty Support Service Goals:
Active e-learning programs require support services to ensure that individual courses run smoothly, that requests for help are answered, that technologies work and that class participants know how to use them. In addition, the Agreement for Distance Learning Between SUNY Plattsburgh of New York and United University Professions requires that support services be provided as resources allow.

1. Promote faculty use of best practices for e-learning courses and programs
   i. Maintain a set of locally approved e-learning best practices as recommended by TLTAG
   ii. Regularly inform the campus of nationally recommended best practices for faculty preparation, e-learning scheduling and class sizes
   iii. Develop or use existing campus incentive awards and rewards for excellent e-learning courses

2. Provide effective point of need support
   i. Provide, assess and monitor e-learning faculty use of point of need support services (help desks, IT office hours, online support forums)
   ii. Continue to encourage a variety of online mechanisms for faculty collaboration

3. Leverage campus faculty expertise
   i. Promote the development of current multi-use resources, such as:
1. Online course repositories if current course management software allows
2. Shells for multi-sectioned courses
3. Online tutorials for library research
4. Departmental assignments, strategies, approaches
   i. Explore cross-listings, team teaching, and interdisciplinary student research projects in the e-learning environment
   ii. Promote to the faculty a gradual progression from web-enhanced to hybrid to fully online courses
   iii. Establish a peer review process for e-learning courses

**Student Development Goals:**
According to the college website, “The Plattsburgh experience challenges students to discover their potential, to seek new intellectual horizons, and to learn skills that can turn dreams into realities. It's an experience that calls students to explore new ground and reach still greater heights of achievement.” This same experience must be part of e-learning courses and programs. Students should be prepared for their e-learning experience in advance, should know what they are embarking on, and be provided with opportunities to grow along the way. Fully online programs must be even more mindful of these student development goals.

1. Develop pre-e-learning selection and orientation services
   i. Enhance the college e-learning web pages to include an emphasis on student support for routine course functions
   ii. Continue to provide access to a sample course for student exploration prior to e-learning course registration
   iii. Provide web accessible Moodle guides for student exploration prior to e-learning course registration or student reference for use during a course

2. Promote e-learning student participation in the cultural and social life of the campus
   i. Explore virtual conferences and seminars for the student body
   ii. Provide resources to encourage and improve appropriate departmental use of e-learning technologies for faculty-student interactions
   iii. Investigate technology, copyright, staffing, and funding issues for broadcasting or narrowcasting of campus speakers, interdisciplinary forums, plays, concerts and sports events
   iv. Link e-learning web and portal channels to virtual campus collections such as the art museum
   v. Explore Web 2.0 (the interactive collaborative web) services for students to collaborate and connect in e-learning

3. Develop post-e-learning measures to assess student satisfaction and collect feedback
   i. Conduct campus-wide student survey on e-learning to obtain student feedback
ii. Create a mechanism for students to propose recommendations for improvement

**Student Support Service Goals:**
Student academic success is greatly influenced by the ease with which they can access critical support services. Moving as many support services as possible into the e-learning environment allows the college to provide critical interventions within the e-learning domain, where students are conducting their academic work.

1. Strengthen broad academic student support services for e-learning
   a. Investigate desktop videoconferencing for advisement and tutoring
   b. Strengthen and expand e-learning library services
   c. Strengthen and expand tutoring and accommodative and disability (SSS) e-learning services
   d. Provide Web accessible guides for student use during a course

2. Establish e-learning student retention activities to be carried out by the Associate Dean of LIS in collaboration with general campus retention activities
   a. Consider additional automated notices to students who haven’t logged into courses within the first few weeks of classes
   b. Consult with campus offices for ideas and strategies for retention
   c. Prepare an annual e-learning course completion/retention report for the campus

3. Strengthen student technology support services for e-learning
   a. Track and assess the expansion of the help desk to support Moodle and other e-learning technologies as use increases

**Staff & Infrastructure Development/Investment Goals:**
 Investing wisely in support staff and the underlying physical infrastructure is essential for quality e-learning programs. Staff involved in faculty development and training, e-learning coordination, e-learning software management, server and network management at Plattsburgh are essential to both traditional and e-learning programs. Short-and long term staff planning is needed to ensure that services and infrastructure are available when they are needed. It is essential therefore to maintain and strengthen all computing and telecommunications networks, software programs for registration, enrollment management and communication, e-learning technology and classroom facilities, e-learning and campus Internet servers and programs.

1. Establish support staff models that both maximize service use and service development
   i. Consider national standards for support staff to faculty/student ratios as benchmarks and goals
   ii. Ensure staffing that includes both technology and pedagogy expertise
   iii. Consider and implement well delineated cross-unit collaborative efforts in e-learning support operations
iv. Ensure adequate support staff time for learning, experimentation, and development; possibly through internal release or rotation options

v. Include staffing (even if temporary) in the planning and funding of new services and software

2. Continue to expand bandwidth & maintain standards for network security in order to encourage wider use of e-learning (especially by distance students) and to assure privacy and security of confidential academic information

vi. Establish strong communication and information sharing between LIS units responsible for e-learning and networks

3. Ensure ongoing maintenance and assessment of e-learning technologies such as course management systems and videoconferencing systems.

vii. Continue TLTAG faculty/technology survey for regular review of technology options and user satisfaction

4. Support and capitalize on web and portal development projects that allow promotion and customization of e-learning information

viii. Consider all new “push” options for communicating with e-learners and faculty

ix. Explore the creation of an e-learning portal channel with just-in-time tutorials, FAQ’s, outside web links, and other e-learning opportunities

x. Establish recommendations and provide content for highlighting e-learning opportunities and information on department and other academic web pages

Revenue Enhancement:
E-learning courses and programs should serve to enhance the college’s academic mission first and foremost. Institutional investments in e-learning must be strategic and cost effective, which is to say, commensurate with the value that e-learning course offerings bring to student and college academic success. At the same time, e-learning course offerings, especially during winter and summer sessions and through the development of new online certificate programs that meet regional needs offer significant potential for generating new revenues.

1. Determine the effectiveness of campus financial investments in e-learning, and research potential changes or improvements
   a. Conduct research and report on technology cost/benefit ratios, course and certificate program enrollment, and other annual measures of institutional fiscal commitments

2. Enhance revenue generation through course and program offerings and facilities use fees
   a. Assist campus planning efforts such as summer/winter review committees and the Provosts office in e-learning analysis
   b. Facilitate development of new online certificate programs
c. Continue to rent out the college’s videoconferencing facilities for external use as time allows

**Strategic Partnerships:**
Regional and SUNY-wide partnerships offer new options for program development and support and are a long-standing tradition at the college. The college should seek and nurture strategic partnerships with other academic and regional educational institutions and coalitions in order to make the best use of limited resources and to open up new opportunities for e-learning ventures.

1. SLN: The SUNY Learning Network.
   a. Potential resource for server hosting, faculty development, student helpdesk services

2. SUNY Adirondack Community College and Hudson Valley Community College
   a. Explore the potential for partnering in the development of guides, faculty development resources, faculty development training sessions, and onsite faculty and student support for the Plattsburgh at Queensbury Branch Campus and faculty and students based at Hudson Valley Community College

3. CCC: Clinton Community College.
   a. Explore the potential for partnering in the development of guides, faculty development resources, faculty development training sessions, and onsite faculty and student support for the Plattsburgh Main Campus
Definitions:

- **Online Course.** A course delivered through the Internet using web-based software. Certain computer skills and a degree of self-motivation are necessary to be successful. Students interact with the instructor and other students primarily through a course-management system. The format is flexible, often letting you log on to the course at any time you wish. However, an instructor may hold synchronous discussions, requiring students to be virtually present at specific times, and instructors may specify narrow time-ranges during which assignments or exams must be accessed. Some instructors may require proctoring of examinations or the use of media material, where students would need to travel to a local campus or library to use media or take exams.

- **Videoconference Course.** A course taught simultaneously between SUNY Plattsburgh and another site (such as the Branch Campus at Adirondack Community College), using video technology as the primary communication link. Two-way audio and video feeds are delivered through a communication system in conjunction with screens and projectors. Students registering for this type of course will be in a classroom with the projectors and monitors, with the instructor teaching live from either location. Most instructors visit the site at which they do not permanently teach. Courses may also use an online course-management system for the distribution of information and the collection of assignments.

- **Hybrid Course.** A course taught through a combination of online, videoconferencing and traditional face-to-face classroom activities. Hybrid courses mix reduced class-time classroom activity or reduced class videoconferencing activity with formal online coursework (any online content replacing face-to-face establishes a course as hybrid according to SUNY registration regulations but only online content between 30-60% will be considered hybrid for Plattsburgh course development stipends) which is used to complete the course contact hours. Online activities, assignment submissions, class discussions or online access to course materials enhance the learning and course communication opportunities.

- **Web-Enhanced Course.** A course taught with traditional classroom techniques and activities, enhanced with web-based activities and resources. Web-enhanced courses do not result in a reduction in traditional course contact hours. As with other forms of online learning, these web-based activities (assignment submissions, class discussions or online access to course materials) are designed to enhance student learning and course communication opportunities.