

## **5. What are the organization's plans to implement and sustain the proposed change?**

RCTC has faculty and administrative support to implement online degrees and programs. It also has the available resources and financial capabilities to do so. Finally, it has a timeline in place to make the change happen.

### ***5.a. Describe the involvement of appropriately credentialed faculty and experienced staff necessary to accomplish the proposed change (curriculum development and oversight, evaluation of instruction, and assessment of learning outcomes).***

Credentialed faculty are involved in each step of the change process:

- Approval process for programs and courses
- Support function of Department of Educational Technology
- Overview function of Distance Education and Technology Committee

#### **Approval process for programs and courses**

As noted throughout this report, RCTC has been delivering online courses for a considerable length of time. The historical beginnings of online delivery at the institution were spearheaded by innovative faculty seeking ways to serve non-traditional student needs and increase enrollments. From those sparse and diverse offerings came the more organized approach to programs and degrees.

The college does not approach online program proposals any differently than campus-based; the same processes for approval within the college are required regardless of delivery method. The Academic Affairs and Standards Council (AASC) is a contractual council established by local agreement as the forum for exchange of views on instructional issues and concerns. The Council comprises a maximum of six faculty members from each union, and provides direction for the College President in all matters included in Academic Affairs, including course outline, award requirements, academic standards, course and program components and the inventory of course and program offerings.

As with all other program proposals, AASC requires the submission of a new online program proposal form indicating need, projected enrollments, sustainability, and faculty support. Prior to this institutional change request, individual courses already approved were not required to reapply if there was a change in



delivery only. This change could be in ITV, telecourse, hybrid or online and is not viewed as affecting the learning outcomes developed for the common course outlines. Similarly, locally approved programs seeking online delivery options did not require new internal approvals, but did need to apply to HLC/MnOnline for accreditation. AASC approval is required if a full program request is going online to the demise of the on ground or in duplication of the on ground.

Because this step will not be necessary with successful approval, AASC will be addressing the impact of changes in a future meeting. The committee will discuss what, if any, impact the approval will have on their practices and consider options such as a more formal RFP process for online conversions. It is expected that some combination of best practices from other similar institutions, and the prior proposal process for HLC/MnOnline, will be adopted to ensure quality and appropriateness.

### **Support function of Department of Educational Technology**

The Department of Educational Technology continues to serve the primary function of support for online faculty and students. As mentioned earlier, recent restructuring has increased the number of personnel in the department, and designated a Director for administrative management. Instructors continue to have access to variety of in-services (Appendix) aimed at learning about the online environment, IMS systems, content conversion, software tools and new technologies. They also can schedule one-on-one sessions with Educational Technologists, complete requests for project assistance or reserve multi-media labs to complete work necessary for their courses. Resources such as the D2L Resource Room, Video In-Service CDs, FAQs and manuals, and online instructor discussion boards through the ET website (<http://www.roch.edu/dept/et/>) serve instructors continuously. Faculty can choose to participate in the Online Education Leader certificate program offered by the department, which is intended to prepare them to teach online with a series of courses. The growth in this area has been steady and consistent, and the restructuring has prepared the college well for this proposed change. The Online Student Advisor continues to serve the unique needs of the online learning community, and monitor services and information aimed at this base. Through management of the RCTC Online website and direct communications such as the initial enrollment letter, this position is vital in connecting potential and existing learners to RCTC resources.

### **Overview function of Distance Education and Technology Committee**

Faculty have been actively involved with the development of online courses and program since the college's initial ventures into distant learning. As online course and programs continued to evolve, it was



clear that the college needed to formalize strategic planning for distance education and to create a structure for faculty to share progress, improvements and areas of concern. The Distance Education/Technology Committee structure was established to meet that need, and its purpose is to develop and forward recommendations regarding distance learning. The areas of focus for the 2005/2006 include:

- A. Accreditation for all online degree programs
- B. Identify and develop solutions for student services which currently require distance education students to come to campus
- C. Online assessment testing
- D. Improved surveys of Distance Education/Technology student services, including improved student responses
- E. Identify sources of funding to support innovative distance education technology
- F. Identify/resolve procedural barriers and improve work flow at the local and state level for seamless delivery of all distance education student services
- G. Develop a process to identify and meet student distance education/technology needs

***5.b. Describe the administrative structure (accountability processes, leadership roles) necessary to support this proposed change.***

There have been major organizational changes at RCTC in conjunction with online learning, many of which were initiated prior to this request. The Vice President of Teaching & Learning is the administrator primarily responsible for this facet of the institution. There have been ongoing efforts to directly tie distance education to the overall academic strategic goals, and they are now more fully integrated. Sections 1.c and 2.a describe how Strategic Plans, Mission Statements and Vision, Integrated Planning Processes, and Continuous Improvement Plans all include online education specifically. Ongoing discussions about the right institutional balance between on line and traditional delivery continue.

Part of this process also involved the creation of an administrative position that would report directly to the V.P. of Teaching & Learning, and would be responsible for managing this asset through the Department of Educational Technology. Information is shared in venues such as the Academic Leadership Meeting (ALM), Distance Education/Technology Committee, Information Technology Committee, Human Resources Committee and Student Development and Services group. This position also brings outside information from service on the MNONLINE Council, the MNSCU Intellectual Properties Group, and as a Peer Reviewer for the HLC/MNONLINE process. Additionally, the college has named a Distance Education Advisor, who is responsible for managing online student needs. This position has managed the RCTC Online website content, coordinated communications with online students and advises potential online students.



The MnOnline Accreditation Team will function for approximately 9 months, until June 2006. They were assembled to complete the institutional change request report, gather data and manage the peer review visit. Once this has occurred, the team will hand off responsibility to existing and permanent entities. This includes the Distance Education and Technology Committee, which serves as primary oversight body. Additionally, it may involve the AASC, ALM and Program Leaders/ Division Coordinator groups. The Director of Educational Technology will be responsible for archiving any and all information, reports and feedback from this process and coordinating long-term efforts in online learning associated with the accreditation.

***5.c. Describe how the organization will make learning resources and support services available to students (student support services, library resources, academic advising, and financial aid counseling).***

To help students that will be taking online classes for the first time at RCTC, we have developed an Online Orientation for Distance Learners at the RCTC Online website. ([http://www.rctc.edu/online/html/online\\_orientation.html](http://www.rctc.edu/online/html/online_orientation.html)). Students are required to go through the orientation before registering for classes. The website contains the following information regarding the areas listed above:

**Virtual eLibrary:**

Goddard Library is not confined to the RCTC campus anymore. Via the virtual library, patrons now have online access to many library services and databases. The library provides patrons many resources not available elsewhere on the Internet and the virtual library page is a great place to begin investigating these resources.

**Resources Available**

**Ask a Librarian**

All of our patrons are welcome to contact our reference staff electronically; our staff will respond to electronic reference service requests as soon as possible.

**eBooks**

eBooks gives patrons access to over 6,500 books online.

**eJournals**

The library currently subscribes to over 13,000 online full-text journal titles. Some of these online resources are available to all Goddard Library patrons and most are available to RCTC students off campus, via the UCR Proxy server.

**eNewspapers**

The library subscribes to many major online newspapers; check out a partial list here.

**eReference Sources**

An electronic reference collection (dictionaries, encyclopedias, manuals, etc.)



#### eResearch Tools

Get immediate help online using research tools tailored to maximize efficient and comprehensive use of Goddard Library resources.

#### eRes

Search for electronic reserves currently posted for classes at the University Center.

#### Remote Access Information

Via the UCR proxy server, all current UCR students can access journals and databases otherwise available only to students on campus. Learn how to access the UCR proxy server here.

#### RCTC Bookstore

The RCTC Bookstore online ordering is the most convenient way to order your college textbooks and have them shipped directly to your home.

#### Bookstore Contacts

<http://bookstore.roch.edu>

Phone Number: 1-800-247-1296 ext. 7202

Fax: 507-285-7496

E-mail: [bookstore@roch.edu](mailto:bookstore@roch.edu)

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#### Student Services

Distance Education offers students more flexibility with their classes and offers a more individualized educational experience. At RCTC, we are still committed to offering high level services to help you succeed in college and reach that ultimate goal of completed college level classes.

#### Admissions & Records Office

At RCTC, Admissions and Records is responsible for just about anything that deals with the admissions process, right through graduating from a particular program.

#### Responsibilities:

Requesting Transcripts

Applying for Graduation

Issues with Web Portal

Registration

Process Applications

Process Intent to Return

Web Address - <http://www.rctc.edu/admissions>

#### Contact:

1-800-247-1296 ext. 7265

#### Online Payment

You can now pay for your classes via the web. If you log into the Web Portal you can use your credit card to pay for your classes without having to send a check in the mail or having to stop by in person.

Web Address - <http://www.rctc.edu/webportal>

#### Contact:

Cashier's Office

1-800-247-1296 ext. 7311

#### Financial Aid



Financial aid is money that students receive in order to help offset the price of education. Each student's aid package is different and is based on income of the student and/or parent. You are still eligible for aid if you are taking online classes.

Financial aid can come in the form of the following:

Grants – Free money that does not have to be paid back

Loans – Money that has to be paid back

Work-Study – Job on campus

Web Address - <http://www.rctc.edu/financialaid>

**Contact:**

1-800-247-1296 ext. 7271

[FinancialAid@rctc.roch.edu](mailto:FinancialAid@rctc.roch.edu)

**Disability Services**

Disability Services provides academic support services to assist students with disabilities in achieving their educational goals.

**Responsibilities:**

To meet program/course requirements and follow college policies and procedures.

To self-identify as a student with a disability when accommodations are needed.

To seek out information, advising, and assistance as necessary.

To provide appropriate documentation about their disability.

To follow published procedures to obtain accommodations and other services.

Web Address -

[http://www.rctc.edu/student\\_support\\_center/html/disability\\_support\\_services.html](http://www.rctc.edu/student_support_center/html/disability_support_services.html)

**Contact:**

Travis Kromminga

1-800-247-1296 ext. 2968

**Advising/Counseling**

Every student has a faculty advisor, faculty counseling advisor, or academic advisor, who is here to support students in their educational growth. Students should work closely with their advisor or counselor so that educational goals are met.

**Distance Education Advisor**

Nate Smith

1-800-247-1296 ext. 5005

[nate.smith@roch.edu](mailto:nate.smith@roch.edu)

**Web Portal**

<http://www.rctc.edu/webportal>

As a Rochester Community and Technical College student, you can count on the Web Portal to help you succeed as a college student. The goal of the Web Portal is to provide you a source to go to with your student services needs, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. You will find information about registration, transcripts, Degree Audit Reports, financial aid and much more.

***5.d. Provide financial data that document the organization's capacity to implement and sustain the proposed change (projected budgets,***



**recent audit reports, revenue streams, cost of facilities, and projected facility and equipment costs).**

This section is divided into the following parts:

- Financial overview
- Online course revenue
- Faculty instructional development grants
- Integrated planning process funds

**Financial overview**

All higher education institutions in the Minnesota State Colleges and University (MNSCU) systems, RCTC included, are funded primarily through state appropriations and tuition. Recent trends have seen a decrease in the amount of money coming from the state, leading to increased tuition rates and fees. In fact, tuition now makes up the majority of revenues, reversing the situation from years past. Despite facing challenges and student concerns at the increased direct costs, the overall budget picture for RCTC is healthy. There are no concerns for long-term development or maintenance in regards to online learning, as financial diligence is considered a critical strategic priority. In addition, support for online learning has been a component of the budget for a number of years, and this change does not require substantial new funding. As the table below shows, the Fiscal Year 2006 operating budget is \$43,492,006. Of that amount, 4.6% or \$1,983,660 is in reserves. That is considered essential in order to respond to unforeseen emergencies, or to offset any dramatic decreases not originally forecast. As previously mentioned, tuition now accounts for 37.4% of the total, while state funding is set at 30.6%. The current FYE enrollment is estimated at 4,381.

Current Funds Revenue Summary							001FIN
FY 2006 Rochester College							
Current FYE Enrollment		4,381		31	03/02/06 08:30 AM		
Description	Port of Budget	Current Budget	YTD Actual	Balance	Port of YTD Actual	Accounts Receivable	Actual \$\$\$ per FYE
Tuition	37.4%	16,269,213	15,718,085	551,128	35.9%	0	\$3,588
State appropriation	30.6%	13,314,921	13,742,235	-427,314	31.4%	0	\$3,137
Federal grants	10.8%	4,692,066	3,804,896	887,170	8.7%	0	\$869
Sales and services	5.8%	2,502,140	3,309,740	-807,600	7.6%	0	\$756
Fees	5.6%	2,428,206	2,337,660	90,546	5.3%	0	\$534
Budgetary accounts (	4.6%	1,983,660	0	1,983,660	0.0%	0	\$0
State grants	4.0%	1,741,910	1,552,988	188,922	3.5%	0	\$354
Private grants	0.7%	287,079	207,492	79,587	0.5%	0	\$47
Other income	0.5%	232,828	22,010	210,817	0.1%	0	\$5
Intra-MnSCU transfer	0.1%	41,601	95,418	-53,817	0.2%	0	\$22
Third party obligations	0.0%	0	-594,712	594,712	-1.4%	0	(\$136)
Prior period adjustmer	0.0%	0	-5,058	5,058	-0.0%	0	(\$1)
Investment/Interest ir	0.0%	0	133	-133	0.0%	0	\$0
Accrued revenue	0.0%	0	3,579,134	-3,579,134	8.2%	0	\$817
Accounts payable	0.0%	0	2,821	-2,821	0.0%	0	\$1
Transfer-in	-0.0%	-1,618	1,882	-3,500	0.0%	0	\$0
	0.0%	0	0	0	0.0%	0	\$0
	100.0%	43,492,006	43,774,724	-282,718	100.0%	0	\$9,992

Figure 13: RCTC financial summary



## Online course revenue

While not specifically noted in the budgetary table as a separate line item, online courses at RCTC generate revenue intended to support distance learning services and offset expenses. Any course that is assigned a 50-series section number is considered an online course, and is assessed a \$20/credit tuition differential. The online courses are also designated as a Media Code 3 within the Integrated Student Registration System (ISRS) and assessed a \$5/credit MnOnline fee. The use of differential tuition is not unique within the MNSCU system, as seen by the table FY 2006-07 On-Line Tuition Rates (Appendix). RCTC's rate is in line with other institution rates, and has not been considered unreasonable or caused decreased enrollments or dissatisfaction in student surveys. Using statistics from fall 2005 semester, which generated 4,401 unduplicated credits, the tuition differential yielded \$ 88,020 for RCTC and \$ 22,005 for MnOnline. Based on the results of the most recent year, RCTC can expect to generate approximately 10,459 credits for the entire fiscal year FY 2006. This would yield \$ 209,180 for the institution, which is the used to support distance education efforts. These monies are placed in the general fund for the college, and dispersed as follows. Base funding for the Department of Educational Technology (DET) personnel (1 Director and 2 Educational Technologists) salaries and benefits is addressed in the general budget, under the Teaching & Learning division, and has been for several years. This is also considered an institutionally supported budget item, and therefore not reliant on the differential tuition income alone. The funds are also used to support the DET departmental budget for ongoing training, conferences, technological purchases, software, and operations. Examples of innovative solutions purchased with these funds include Classroom Response Systems, Interactive Video Carts, Podcasting, Captivate, Symposium and the Digital Media Center Faculty Multimedia Lab. Any additional expenses related to online learning such as infrastructure upgrades, computer services department needs, licensing and others could also be offset with the money generated from online courses.

The assumption at RCTC has been that online programs must be economically viable, which means enrollments must be at the level considered acceptable. Historically, the college has adopted lower enrollments for online courses than campus courses, but this decision is also under review. The online courses are capped at 24 students or 16 when an instructor has not taught an online class before. This can be a significant difference from campus courses, and have economic implications on revenue. For example, science courses capped at 96 students have 75% fewer students in online sections, making the tuition differential essential in order to afford this decrease. Other disciplines are less dramatic, with online courses at about 75% capacity of campus courses, but this issue is being addressed in several committees. This situation also requires careful monitoring of enrollments and cancellations in cases of low enrollment. In general, online courses that are 75% filled at the cut-off date are kept on the schedule



If an online section is cancelled, the college does its best to offer alternatives and address reasons for low enrollments.

## Faculty Instructional Development Grants

The division of Teaching & Learning has been providing incentive funding for online course development through Faculty Instructional Development Grants (FIDG). These grants have been offered for several years to encourage faculty to pursue projects intended to address specific academic strategies. In 2005, \$20,000 was made available in awards up to \$1,500 each. There were three items specifically related to online learning: Reuseable Learning Objects development, online courses that can be peer-reviewed during creation, and online course development, specifically for those courses missing or in short supply for the online AA degree.

## Integrated Planning Process funds

Additionally, faculty and staff are encouraged to seek institutional funds through the Integrated Planning Process (IPP). The college has developed the following four goals for FY 2007, and specific strategies within each:

Goal 1: Create a Culture of Accountability Through Assessment and Continuous Improvement.

Goal 2: Enhance Learning Through Improved Instruction, Support Services, Technology, and Facilities.

Goal 3: Advance Learning Excellence and Improve Organizational Focus.

Goal 4: Engage Diverse Stakeholders and Strengthen Enduring Relationships.

Departments and divisions can request additional funding beyond normal operating budgets for projects related to these goals at the IPP website ([www.rctc.edu/ipp](http://www.rctc.edu/ipp)). In FY 2006, 757 departmental strategies were submitted using this system. The Cabinet reviews all submissions, and assigns an award based on strategic priorities. Online learning strategies are expected to be a major theme throughout, and investments should be significant. The IPP process is part of the RCTC culture, and provides a direct link between strategies and resources.

### ***5.e. Specify the timeline used to implement the proposed change.***

January 2005: Pilot for Educational Technology restructuring begins



February 2005:	Distance Education Solve and Dissolve group develops online strategies for RCTC, including online AA degree
Spring 2005:	Academic Leadership group identifies online accreditation as high priority in strategic plans, assigning the Director responsibility.
July 2005:	Lynette Olson, MNSCU Assessment & Effectiveness Director hosts informational session at RCTC for administration. Application for Institutional Change is submitted
September 2005:	RCTC MNONLINE Accreditation Team is formed. Distance Education/Technology Committee addresses process.
October 2005:	Director of Educational Technology completes MnOnline Peer Review Training
November 2005:	Weekly Team meetings are scheduled and begin MNSCU campuses recently approved or undergoing process are contacted for consultation and advice (St. Cloud, Mankato, Riverland)
December 2005:	Quality Matters Peer Review team pilot begins
January 2006:	Department of Educational Technology restructuring made permanent Lynette Olson hosts session for campus community with Distance Education and Technology Committee
February 2006:	Self-study (Best Practices) document completed Regular updates are given through College Crossings, Program Leader and Division Coordinator meetings, ALM, Senate/Cabinet, AASC, and Open Forums Noel Levitz PSOL survey administered
March 2006:	Final draft of Accreditation Report completed Report is distributed campus-wide for commentary
April 2006:	Resource Room (e-folio) completed, peer review team given access Mock Peer Review Visit scheduled
May 2006:	Peer Team visit complete, feedback report generated
June 2006:	Administrative Assistant degree offered online
July 2006:	Smarthinking online tutoring service initiated
August 2006:	Associates of Arts (AA) degree offered online
August 2006:	Programs seeking online delivery for FY 2007 seek internal approvals established by college

