NWCCD Strategy 1: Implementation of Universal Design for Learning (UDL), ADA, CTA, and Quality Matters Guidelines, Requirements, and Training

Guidelines, Requirements, and Training Overview:

Universal Design for Learning (UDL) Guidelines are a collection of principles, guidelines, and research to assist faculty members in the design of an online learning environment. Consideration of learning types, educator approaches, philosophical ideals, and theoretical materials are all components of the UDL guidelines. In theory, any type of learner should be able to enroll in an online course and master the skillset or gain knowledge based on the presentation of the online classroom component. Using UDL guidelines also provides faculty members with a constructed classroom that is consistently replicated, does not deviate from the outline presented by UDL, and works to enhance the learning experience of the student population.

Targeted Population:

The targeted population for implementation of all guidelines and requirements includes all faculty members of CTE programs who have or are developing and designing a course that is either for hybrid or online delivery. The online classroom component will be critical to the overall course presentation and it is necessary to remain within the standard presented by all of the guidelines while also focusing on areas of the topic or subject being taught. The faculty member population will also benefit from following the guidelines as this provides a structure that caters to a vast majority of learners, not just limiting to a specific type of online student. Current CTE faculty that have already created courses for TAACCCT Round 3 will be asked to review their specific developments to ensure that all guidelines have already been met. CTE faculty that are beginning to create courses will be introduced to all guidelines and monitored to make sure the format is being followed.

Delivery Environment and Market Needs:

The delivery environment was completed through the online classroom component of a hybrid and/or online course. Because higher education is reporting an increase in numbers of student population that can be categorized as non-traditional, consideration of the overall student population need is necessary. To offer an online classroom component that meets the demands of multiple learner characteristics while incorporating the competency-based knowledge required in an accelerated hybrid course model is complex and requires a supportive operating system. Using the current LMS offered at NWCCD is going to be the optimal delivery environment.

CTE faculty members were asked to do one-on-one training with Instructional Designers to go over requirements, guidelines, and options for designing and developing course for accelerated, hybrid, and online delivery. A majority of faculty members who participated in the one-on-one sessions were also involved in development of courses or programs during Round 3. Working through the actual technical program curriculum and aligning it with the technology offerings that the district provides gave the CTE

faculty a better understanding of how the LMS works, the tools available, what guidelines and requirements need to be followed and what the student perspective might be of an online classroom.

In addition to one-on-one training, a group session for the Turnitin program was offered to all faculty. The Turnitin program is under utilized at NWCCD and faculty have been encouraged in the last year to have a better understanding of the program and use it as a tool to grade student papers more efficiently and effectively. Students will benefit from using the tool for writing assignments and faculty can use the Turnitin program as an additional support system when grading.

Given the current downward turn in the economy, Campbell, Johnson, and Sheridan counties have seen an increase in interest of non-traditional students returning to school. The market needs indicate that the offering of online courses, either full or in a hybrid model, are ideal for individuals looking to maintain employment while attending classes. The market need also indicates a hesitancy for online learning, concerns about being lost in a classroom or unable to use technological support to its fullest extent being primary issues. Because of this, faculty need to know how to design and develop an online course that meets requirements based on UDL, CTA, ADA, and Quality Matters guidelines.

As the reputation of NWCCD continues to grow within the region it is possible that the guidelines which influence the overall course design of an online classroom component will be a selling factor for distance education students. Projected growth is still unknown because projects have not been introduced to the public for pilot testing or actual implementation into the academic catalogue.

The Need for UDL, ADA, CTA, and Quality Matters Guideline Implementation:

Similar to other compliance requirements, UDL, ADA, CTA, and Quality Matters Guidelines are necessary with any course development. For an online component of a hybrid course, the guidelines not only provide an outline of how to develop an online component but also provide ease in reproduction of the finished product in the future. CTE faculty are not consistent with following the guidelines and meeting the requirements based on work from Round 1 and the early stages of Round 3. One-on-one training proved to be effective and courses that were then designed for the end of Round 3 reflected the characteristics of all the guidelines.

To meet the goals of increased enrollment, retention, and completion rates, the development and delivery of academic models in a variety of formats is necessary. A variety of delivery models for courses, certificates, and degree programs allows traditional and non-traditional students to explore educational options that align with their overall goals. Introducing the development and delivery of accelerated, online, and hybrid course models provides options to the working student, the single parent student, the recently laid-off student, or a traditional student looking for schedule alternatives. Current research supports the theory that based on the population and area the community college serves the lower rates of enrollment, retention, and completion are directly related to the lack of courses, certificates, and programs offered in multiple delivery models.

Originally, community colleges were designed to serve lower socioeconomic sectors, provide higher education at reduced tuition costs, and appeal to non-traditional students living in or around the area. The non-traditional population is often older, take into consideration family and professional obligations, and are more likely to face scheduling conflicts. To avoid a "cooling out" phase where students struggle with developing a compatible schedule that can include both life responsibilities and academic expectations, which may eventually lead to discontinuation of the chosen educational pathway, the development and use of accelerated, online, and/or hybrid models are ideal for continuing to peak student's interest in higher education.

The development of accelerated, online, and hybrid delivery models also works to accommodate the professional schedules of students and employers. With the recent economic downturn in Wyoming, many students are attempting to pursue a stronger educational background while also looking for continued employment. The development of multiple delivery models and a high level of engagement in presented curriculum is still possible, meeting a critical component of community college mission statements in the twenty-first century. With just offering the traditional 16-week semester that is based in a physical classroom the needs of the student population are not being met. Including designed delivery models that feature accelerated, online, and hybrid components meets the need of the population and allows for a quick turnaround on expanding student's educational background.

Project Methodology:

For courses already developed under Round 3, reviews were completed to ensure that all guidelines and requirements were followed. Along with the UDL booklet, a simple guide (found at http://www.udlcenter.org/print/371) was used to see what areas of the courses complied with the guidelines and what areas still need improvement. The ADA guidebook, CTA guidebook, and Quality Matters rubric were also used to determine if courses were meeting online learning requirements. Faculty will be asked to bring their courses up to the standard guidelines where applicable.

For faculty beginning to work on CTE course development, all of the guidelines were discussed and faculty members were asked to follow the requirements. Checkpoints during the course development occurred to confirm that the requirements are being followed. Once course development was completed, a final review was conducted to make sure that requirements and guidelines were followed.

The design of an online degree program or individual courses supports areas of the community college that consistently show signs of struggling. Said areas (enrollment, retention, and graduation rates) are requiring improvements of existing course models if goals by administration are to be met. In developing the online courses, the end goals of the community college need to be kept in mind. Development of online programs will promote not only the educational opportunities offered by the community college but also support students who may be considered part of the non-traditional population, provide an alternative option to the traditional Face-to-Face programs that are commonly known, and assist individuals who do not have the time to spend in a classroom for two consecutive years.

Guidelines and requirements support consistency in developing online courses, which is necessary. For a student attempting an online course, the presented modules need to be the same layout regardless of subject. Each module includes the same resources (campus details, school information, faculty information, course information, and course policies) and same initial outline of the course. Regardless of what online learning system the faculty member uses to builds the competency-based modules (Blackboard, Canvas, SoftChalk, etc.) the outline of the online classroom remains identical.

Key components of the online website for a course include:

- ADA information (online development also needs to meet ADA, UDL, Quality Matters, and CTA standards)
- Welcome Message
- Faculty Contact Information
- Textbook Information
- Important Documents (course overview, syllabus, instructor policies, school policies, and school resources)
- Course Expectations
- Course Links to Assignments, Assessments, Learning Modules, Quizzes, Tests, etc.

Note: It is important to take into consideration the length of the program, courses required, state and federal requirements, and expectations of the program faculty members. The information covered and required curriculum in the eight courses remain the same, even with the difference in delivery environment. A few components that remain at the forefront of developing the accelerated hybrid pathway was the amount of time spent in the traditional classroom versus the hybrid component; the material to be covered that reflected competency-based learning in the hybrid component; the amount of assignments, activities, and assessments that would be part of each competency-based learning module within the course design; and how to achieve the desired Face-to-Face interaction between faculty and students while incorporating the online/hybrid component.

Timeframe for Development:

Refinement and review of the guidelines and requirements for accelerated, hybrid, and online courses covers the period of September 2016 through March 2017 under the DOL-ETA TAACCCT Round 3 grant award. Final testing and modification of the program will be complete in March 2017, with the remaining time used to evaluate the efficacy of the model through data analysis and reporting.

Lessons Learned:

The requirements of UDL, ADA, Quality Matters, and CTA influence how faculty members prepare and deliver online courses, online components, and any educational trainings or tools that benefit the learning environment. The standards provide an outline for faculty members to develop and expand the foundation of information being presented on any given topic. In addition to guiding a faculty member

when they are developing their online course, the requirements also represent a consistent expectation throughout the higher education industry. Any type of visit from an accrediting body would allow for a presentation of online course development that is meeting federal guidelines set forth by UDL, ADA, Quality Matters, and CTA organizations along with an example of how consistent faculty members are being with educational tools throughout the institution.

Based on Department of Education standards and educational theory and practice, in order for optimum learning to occur courses should strike a balance between exposure to instructional materials and student absorption time. Hands-on courses are generally more effective in an accelerated model, where general and theoretical education classes require more time for student reflection.

In addition to educational challenges, NWCCD must consider the population in its service area. The targeted population served by the accelerated, hybrid, and online learning system is a working demographic; students do not have the workplace flexibility to be absent from their employment to participate in the numerous consecutive contact hours required to condense a course. Faculty will need to be aware of what is required and commit to following the guidelines and requirements for accelerated, hybrid, and online courses.