The Online Course Improvement Program (OCIP) started in 2009 as a partnership between The Associated Students of New Mexico State University/Student Technology Advisory Committee (ASNMSU/STAC) and the College of Extended Learning (CEL). With the completion of OCIP’s second year (Y2), the program has made progress in meeting its overall goal of supporting quality blended and online courses.

The purpose of this report is to provide the Student Technology Advisory Committee about an update about the impact and progress of OCIP Y2 (July 1, 2010 through June 30, 2011). Both quantitative (data tracking) and qualitative measures (focus groups, surveys, and communications) inform the results of this report. Three major themes to emerge from the data are as follows: 1) OCIP is helping to address a faculty professional development need; 2) The One Year Plus Fellowship Program (1Y+) is helping faculty improve the quality of their courses and teaching in all contexts; 3) Revised and improved blended/online courses are having a positive impact on students and their learning.

In OCIP Y2 (Fall 2010 and Spring 2011), 27 professional development events were hosted as compared to 15 events in OCIP Y1 (Spring and Summer 2010). There was growth in overall attendance (378 (Y2), 178 (Y1) and unique attendees both from the NMSU main campus (160 (Y2), 133 (Y1), branch campuses (63 (Y2), 30 (Y1) and other participants (63 (Y2), 15 (Y1). In Y1 & Y2, there have been participants from all the six academic colleges. For three of the colleges (ACES, A&S, & EDUC) the number of unique participants has remained stable. For three of the colleges (BUS, ENG, & HHS), the number of unique participants has increased. Additionally, all levels of faculty (Prof., Assoc. Prof., Assist. Prof, etc.) have attended OCIP professional development. This data indicates OCIP is of value to a wide audience of faculty members in all the main campus colleges as well as the branch campuses.

For OCIP’s One Year Plus Fellowship (1Y+), a more in-depth 16-month professional development commitment, 19 qualified applicants applied as compared to 17 qualified applicants for Y1. Twelve of the 15 Y2 1 Y+ Fellows successfully completed the program. Out of a total of 29 1 Y+ Fellows, 20 (69%) have completed the program, 4 (14%) participants have partially complete the program and 5 (17%) participants have dropped out due to being over committed, health problems, or family emergencies. As part of their commitment to the program, the 1 Y+ Fellows are now giving back to the faculty community through peer mentoring and professional development. Their activities help meet the program goals of fostering peer interaction encouraging best practices in online learning and fostering a culture of quality for online courses.
On average, an estimated 625 students take the 12 revised Y2 blended/online courses. Feedback from the 1 Y+ Fellows indicates they will be applying what they’ve learned to their other blended/online courses. When the numbers of students taking other blended/online courses taught by the 1Y+ Y2 Fellows are factored in, the number of students taking improved courses increases to approximately 1,500. Student responses on the course evaluations, which focused mainly on the design of the course, showed a high level of satisfaction overall with the blended/online courses and their learning experience.

Focus Areas for OCIP Y3

- Collecting data on the cost of the course supplies and materials.
- Having faculty member certified as course peer-reviewers (Quality Matters) and promoting more informal peer-to-peer course reviews.
- Expanding the OCIP Resources Center and engaging faculty in using and contributing to it.
- Helping faculty transition to the new course learning management system.
- Improving OCIP outreach efforts to the main campus departments.

Funding for Fiscal 2013

The College of Extended Learning has requested stable funding for three staff positions, which in addition to two other staff members, will support OCIP as part of their job responsibilities. The outcome of this request will determine how the OCIP budget, if funded for another year, would be spent. If staff funding from DE fees is approved, OCIP monies would be spent on faculty professional development stipends, helping to grow the program and diversify the services provided, as well as purchase organizational memberships and resource (SoftChalk, conference fees, etc.). If staff funding from DE fees is not approved, then the OCIP monies would help pay salaries and fringes for two staff positions, as it has for the past three OCIP budgets.

Sampling of 1Y+ Fellows Feedback

How has your thinking about teaching changed?
In general, the group felt that they had a better sense of what was possible in an online course in terms of activities and interactions. Additionally, they came to understand they could have same expectations of quality, community, and interaction in their online courses as in their face-to-face courses. Finally, there were many comments about how they've come to understand more deeply the importance of learning objectives.

How has program changed your pedagogy?
A big area was in really re-thinking about student perspective and helping students realize why they have to do the different readings, activities, etc. (e.g. learning objectives); also had comments on thinking more about pedagogy in general instead of focusing on the tech.

➢ “I am seeing measurable differences in the response, satisfaction and performance of students in both my blended and online courses.”
“…my classes are now benefiting from my new understanding of course organization and alignment.

“I'm so thrilled to learn how to make my course more engaging.”

Sampling of Student Course Evaluation Feedback

How clear were the course requirements in terms of what you were expected to learn in the course?

➢ “I received a complete introduction, which clearly explained the course's goals.”
➢ “More than what I expected, happy that it was.”
➢ “Very comprehensive and clear. Outstanding”

Availability of the instructor

➢ “The instructor does a great job being available for us even though we are in an online course.”

Would you recommend this course to others? 88% responded “Yes”.

➢ “I have already recommended it (the online course) to others.”