

Distance Learning by any Other Name



As we prepare for summer and perhaps a return to a more normal looking fall, many are taking stock of the last year of COVID-19 emergency measures and thinking about what we have learned. We have rapidly adapted classroom-based courses and programs for online delivery, streamlined our professional

development for faculty new to online instruction, adopted some new mixed delivery modes that are often referred to as hybrid, flex or live-online, waived a number of policies and provided increased access for students by providing equipment, connectivity, or simpler pathways for enrollment. All in all, I think most would agree that while the pandemic has been horrible in most ways, necessity has brought on some reinvention of how we run our business and serve our students.

As we begin to look back and study some of the ways we have delivered instruction, an interesting and yet troubling issue has emerged. We don't seem to be able to talk with each other about these modes of delivery with the assurance and understanding that we had pre-pandemic. What is clear is that we all think that we understand terms like hybrid, flex, hyflex and remote learning, but when we begin to examine the details of how the actual model is implemented on each campus, we note differences. Some subtle and some significant such that that the common understanding rapidly evaporates.

Once the details of a delivery mode are examined, we may find a lot of disagreement about the terminology used to describe it. In the chaos of addressing the challenges brought on by the pandemic and the amazing creativity at each college and university to craft an effective instructional model that will work for faculty and students while living within the existing administrative structure of systems, faculty bargaining agreements and student's needs, differences were bound to occur. After all, that innovation and determination to carry on for students is what got us through. Now we need to be able to wrap our heads around what is going on, capture the information in a meaningful way and tell the story. We need to be able to report with some good analytics as to what occurred for administrative and fiscal reasons at the institutional and state levels.

We also need to be able to clearly explain what is involved in these various ways of delivering instruction to our students and faculty. And we need to be able to accurately tell the story of what happened to an increasingly interested and perhaps somewhat skeptical public. As a result, the DLSS Members Council has begun a discussion and exploration of what is involved in the various delivery methods we now use, what type of professional development might be needed for each, the type of student support required and the terminology that is in use to describe it. We are not alone in this conversation. Other national and state level groups, including some accreditors, are also pondering these questions. So, the work is important, timely and may have a positive lasting impact.

If you were not able to join us for the most recent meeting of the DLSS Members Council, please speak with your colleagues or any of the staff for further information. We welcome your engagement on these questions as we look beyond the pandemic.



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Q&A with Dr. Kendall St. Hilaire

Each DLSS newsletter will feature a Q&A with one of our institution partners. Dr. Kendall St. Hilaire is campus president for IRSC Global at Indian River State College and is the chair of the Members Council on Distance Learning and Student Services. The FLVC and Members Council thanks her for her invaluable service and leadership this past year.



How did you get started with Indian River State College and tell us about the creation of IRSC Global?

I was hired as one of the instructional designers to design and develop alongside our faculty some of the first-degree programs for what the college at that point was calling the Virtual Campus.

That was something that the college put together as a strategic initiative back in 2010-11 and the work really began in 2012.

The College put some resources behind the creation of a Virtual Campus and our idea was to focus on the highest enrolled baccalaureate programs and associate degree programs here at IRSC and design the courses using a quality assurance rubric. The goal was to put entire degree programs together for our residents to take online if they needed that option.

Fast forward a couple years, and we saw a lot of growth. It's obviously in our immediate area but we were also starting to see some student enrollments pop out from outside of our region around the state. So, we've been keeping an eye on that over the last couple of years.

Our new president, Dr. (Timothy) Moore landed in at the beginning of the fall (2020) semester, and one of the first things he did was create IRSC Global. In doing so, we will offer our online programs here at the college to a broader audience around the state, potentially nationwide, even internationally. This change also positions the college to have some involvement in other areas of digital learning. We've got the academic programs and paths but also there is a large need for corporate trainings and materials, and we're exploring what opportunities look like there as well.

What policies and procedures regarding online classes put in place during COVID-19 do you see remaining after the pandemic ends?

For the first time there is specific language around the interactions and the instruction in an online class. Come this July, the U.S. Department of Education will hold institutions responsible for ensuring that engagement exists in these online classes in such a way that is demonstrated by a certain set of behaviors.

For me, that's exciting because it means if we design well and we have fantastic faculty who are teaching online and are using the design elements as well as the tools available, they can create some wonderful learning opportunities for students.

In the past, we haven't had something to point to and say, this is an accountability thing. For us it was always "this is pedagogical, these are things we have learned in the field." So, I see engagement in online classes as something that's changed and become more of a mainstream conversation. I think the virtual proctoring and assessments are still going to be something that many departments and schools really struggle with. It's just something I think we're going to have to continue to look at as educators and determine which approach we want to take. Do we want to require virtual proctoring for a number of assessments and have less authentic assessment going on in some disciplines? That is easier said than done.

What do you think is the value and importance of the Member's Council?

I think it's great to have the opportunity to hear from people across systems. I really feel that makes me more informed on a state level. Prior to being the chair, just coming to the meetings and listening to the universities, listening to other state colleges share things we were working on in distance learning or things that we were struggling to solve or cool things that we were doing, it was really neat to hear how other schools were doing this.

And I think that is a benefit for the state of Florida in terms of having these cross-system conversations. We don't all have the same type of mission, we're different numbers in terms of sizes of school, enrollment numbers, what have you, but we all come together around this common interest and desire to improve distance learning. That networking piece, that cross system dialogue is great.

I think it fosters creativity. It allows for just having connections with people from across the system. If we're experiencing a problem in some department with a maybe third-party vendor tool or something, I can pick up the phone because I know someone down at Palm Beach State (College) is using it too. I have direct access to someone who would be able potentially solve a problem or shed light from a practitioner's standpoint on services and tools.

I do think as a result of these partnerships all of us have been able to support our institutions better as well because we're not in a silo trying to figure out how to move everybody online or how to do labs or how to do proctoring. We instantly had a network, a support group almost. We are still doing that, we're still connecting, sharing out what we've learned from the last time we got together. We are connecting and staying in touch and I think that's going to allow us to better serve our schools. We're a little bit more aware of what's out there, what research is showing us. We can pick up the phone and answer a question rather than having to wait two weeks for the sales guy to get back to you. There are some real-time strengths in the Member's Council, and it helps us do our job more efficiently, I think.

Requirement Reminders for Distance Learning Fee

As many of you know, utilization of the distance learning fee on each campus depends on two additional things besides the requirement that the course be classified as such. First, the course must be listed in the online catalog. Second, a link to the online catalog must be provided within each institution's website in two places: the advising and distance learning pages of each institution's website. You can find the specific requirement in s.1009.23 (16) F.S. or s. 1009.24 (17) F.S depending upon if you are a college or university.

As you know, we routinely receive requests for data from the Auditor General on these matters and we always inform any institution when those requests come in. Recent checks have determined that only about seven institutions are fully in compliance with the statute as it relates to providing the required links in the advising and distance learning sections of their websites. As with the course data, this aspect is also subject to audit. As a reminder, please make sure that the links to the online catalog are located as required.

You can find the specific description and logo [here](#). If you have any further questions, please let us know via email at catalog@flvc.org

FLVC Hosts College 101 Series

More than 2,780 people registered to attend a four-night event hosted by FLVC last month that helped students get the all the information they need to prepare, apply, and pay for college.

“College 101: What to Do, When to Do it, and How” was held March 8-11, and each night covered a different and important step of the college preparation process.

This event was free to attend and brought together experts and partners from around the state to help students explore their college options including various career and technical programs, understand and excel in the application process, learn about the three main ways to pay for college and finish their senior year strong so they can start the fall semester on the right track.

The FLVC also hosted another virtual College 101 event – Finishing the FASFA – on March 22 and 29.



Students were able to learn step-by-step how to complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid, which is the best way to make college affordable. Financial aid experts were on hand to answer questions.

Videos for each of these events can be viewed at <https://www.floridashines.org/go-to-college/get-ready-for-college/college-101-event> and <https://www.floridashines.org/go-to-college/get-ready-for-college/college-101-finishing-the-fasfa>.

Partners for these events included: *AVID; Broward County Public Schools; Florida Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators; Florida College Access Network; Florida Department of Education; Florida PTA; Florida School Counselor Association; FLORIDA TRIO; FloridaShines; The School District of Osceola County; Office of Student Financial Assistance; Polk County Schools and Take Stock in Children.*

Students and the Pandemic: Survey Roundup

Many of us have asked students about a range of things from their feeling about new forms of class delivery, their needs during the pandemic, their ongoing health or satisfaction with health and safety measures. Our colleague, Phil Hill at Mindwires, has created a webpage that provides links to some of the largest or best representative surveys from all over the country. You can hop over and check out the collection through the following link: <https://mindwires.com/summary-of-covid-surveys/>



2021 Online Quality Needs Survey Results

In February 2021, FLVC invited higher education institutions in Florida to participate in an Online Quality Needs Survey. Survey results were collected. Aggregate data was compiled and included in the survey results document, which can be download via this [web link](#).

To address your institution’s needs reflected in the survey results, FLVC will keep working with you and stakeholders across Florida. We will keep providing quality services and resources to you through the [FLASQ Initiative](#), its Community of Practice and many other platforms. Thank you for your participation and support!

[A Welcome to the New Members Council Leadership](#)

The FLVC would like to welcome the incoming leadership to the DLSS Members Council:

- Chair – Dr. Brian Marchman, Assistant Provost and Director, Distance & Continuing Education (University of Florida)
- Past Chair - Dr. Kendall St. Hilaire, Campus President – IRSC Global (Indian River State College)
- Chair Elect – Dr. Lemond Hall, Director, TCC Online, (Tallahassee Community College)
- Dr. Phil Simpson (Eastern Florida State College) – co-chair of the Strategic Partnership and Licensing Standing Committee.
- Vicki Westergard (St. Petersburg State College) – co-chair of the Online Instruction Standing Committee.

DLSS
Distance Learning and
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