

University of New Orleans

September 17, 2015

Consulting Visit

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Table of Contents

Executive Summary.....	3
Introduction	4
Methodology:.....	4
Scope of evaluation:	4
Staffing and Organizational Structure	5
Financial Infrastructure.....	7
Online Learning.....	9
Summer Session.....	12
Program Opportunities	14
Table 1: New Online Programs.....	14
Baccalaureate Degree Completion Programs.....	15
Graduate Programs.....	18
Private Industry Partnerships	19
Course Management	20
Compliance	22
Action Items Checklist.....	23
Table 2: Action Items Checklist	23
Future Items for Consideration	24
Appendices.....	25
Appendix A: Itinerary	26
Appendix B: Bio Dr. Gayla Stoner	27
Appendix C: Bio Vickie S. Cook.....	28

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Executive Summary

The Consultant Team is pleased to present our recommendations to the University of New Orleans (UNO) regarding the evaluation of distance education and summer session. As the recommendations demonstrate, we believe there are profound challenges, as well as exciting and significant growth opportunities facing university leadership in the areas of distance education and summer offerings, as well as non-credit activities. Moreover, we believe that these challenges and opportunities are not limited to the future of distance education and summer session, but must be seen within the larger strategic context for the university. At stake are such major issues as the quality of programs, the future of online learning, the nature of the UNO's outreach to the community and region, and the role of the adult learner at the university.

Our findings and recommendations are organized around the seven topics listed below. A summary of our recommendations with actionable items are outlined at the end of our evaluation report.

1. Staffing and Organizational Structure
2. Financial Infrastructure
3. Online Learning
4. Summer Session
5. Program Opportunities
6. Course Management
7. Compliance

One overriding observation cuts across all recommendations: ***Distance Education (DE) is isolated from the rest of the University, and that isolation is not healthy. The negative consequences of isolation include at least the following:***

1. Quality concerns, both perceived and real.
2. Failure to leverage UNO's talented faculty in programs designed to project the University's brand beyond the region to national and international audiences.
3. Duplication and inefficiencies in administrative support in several areas. One such inefficiency is the similarity of programs offered through the colleges.
4. Significantly lower net revenue generation due to the absence of accountability in course management and the failure to centrally manage typically high revenue generation operations areas such as online learning and summer session.

We believe that both DE and the institution need to make significant changes in order to reach the level of sophistication and success one would expect to find in a metropolitan research university's approach to the adult market. Essentially, DE must become more empowered in some vital areas while simultaneously being held more accountable for quality and financial performance. At the same time, the core of UNO must embrace DE and eliminate the current practice of marginalizing the offerings, faculty, and staff associated with DE and instead seize the opportunities DE affords for advancing the institution's strategic interests, especially in online learning and other programs for the adult market. See the Suggested Programs in Table 1 and Action Item Checklist in Table 2 for additional information.

Introduction

The Consultant Team is comprised of two distance education experts, Gayla Stoner and Vickie Cook. Emeritus William Sharpton and Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs John W. Nicklow served as the primary contact for the evaluation. The Consultant Team visited the UNO campus on August 3-4, 2015.

CV's for both Dr. Stoner and Dr. Cook are available in the Appendices.

Methodology:

This evaluation was informed by a participant-oriented model to appropriately capture the needs of all stakeholders, including faculty, staff, leadership, and students. The evaluation included the following methods: document review, data review, focus group interviews, and in-depth individual interviews.

Scope of evaluation:

- Evaluate the staffing of the Distance Education/Online and Summer Session areas to determine its ability to deliver and provide:
- Provide an evaluation of the financial infrastructure to deliver innovative programs that meet student demand.
- Provide a comprehensive audit and evaluation of the educational technology infrastructure and services currently used for distance education programs.
- Determine the quality of the equipment and software, and their appropriateness for online education.
- Determine whether the current approach to services related to online learning are appropriate and up-to-date (e.g., authentication, ADA compliance, quality control, design standards, delivery standards, etc.)

- Evaluate opportunities for alternative semester offerings, including summer and winter session.
- Evaluate the institution’s ability to deliver rich media in courses in terms of educational technology.

Staffing and Organizational Structure

The future of DE’s organizational structure largely depends upon the degree to which the Consultant Team recommendations are adopted. For example, if DE is given leadership responsibilities for managing online programs, or summer session, that will entail an investment in or reallocation of resources, as well as the establishment of an incentive program. Since the degree to which Consultant Team recommendations are adopted is speculative, this section focuses on observations of apparent weaknesses in the current staffing and organizational structure.

- There is no vision for DE offerings within the current DE staffing.* As a result, the DE offerings are fragmented across the campus. Faculty are provided little, if any, support for program offerings. While there are faculty interested in offering online programs, there is no central campus area or unit identified to provide resources for the delivery of high-quality distance education program offerings.
- DE leadership must be held more accountable for performance.* We did not get the sense that DE leadership is held accountable for quality measures through such mechanisms as a rigorous course evaluation program that includes a faculty engagement component.
- The administrative DE structure for enrollment, academic advising and student services is extremely convoluted and should be clarified.* If it is convoluted for experienced professionals like the Consultant Team, then it must be so for students and faculty as well.
- DE needs a marketing professional capable of projecting the UNO brand—with DE programs—to national and international markets.* We also believe it is imperative for DE to do more market analysis of its current and prospective programs, whether this function is in-house or outsourced. The marketing professional associated with this function should also have a strong understanding of the academic programs being launched, as well as understanding of the online student market.
- The Consultant Team understands the previous Distance Learning Committee is no longer meeting on a regular basis and, in fact, is considered defunct.* DE strategic initiatives must have an oversight committee represented by shared voices across the

UNO campus. The concept of such an oversight committee will enable a formal structure to identify the student demand, as well as the appropriate programming required to serve students through a DE central unit. Leadership should work with the oversight committee to create concept and mission statements that represent the current and ongoing needs of the central unit.

- F. *The establishment of a charter outlining the responsibilities of the formal oversight committee will ensure the participants understand their roles and expectations within the committee.* The oversight committee should be comprised of no more than 12 members of faculty, staff, administration, campus support unit leaders from enrollment management, marketing, as well as community members and private industry leaders. The charter of the oversight committee should include the following components: participant composition, responsibilities, tenure, selection, accountability, procedures, participation requirements, and evaluation processes. The key vision of the oversight committee should include the responsibility of a continuous review of the central DE unit performance. The oversight committee will support the central DE unit to identify and enhance the program offerings.
- G. *Although the Consultant Team did not spend time evaluating DE's non-credit programs, UNO should examine its organizational structure for non-credit programs. In particular, the establishment of noncredit professional development modules and certificates will broaden the reach to working professionals.* UNO leadership indicated that non-credit programming is well worth the investment. We do not question that judgment, and in fact concur; we do, however, suggest a clear-eyed evaluation of whether UNO's potential to launch quality non-credit programs includes a revenue share to the programs and central administration that will support centralized general functions such as marketing, IT, and other support services required to manage a non-credit initiative. If not, then leadership should charge a financial subcommittee within the oversight committee identified in the Consultant Team recommendations to establish a self-sustaining fiscal model. A best practice for revenue sharing models within non-credit programs, is 60/40% share of gross revenue. Additionally, roles and responsibilities will need to be delineated to the percentage of revenue share. For example, the colleges should maintain responsibility for faculty costs through their revenue share. Central administration would cover the cost of marketing, administrative program management, instructional design, technical support, student services, and recruitment. Additionally, non-credit programs should be managed by the central DE unit. This way, non-credit offerings will be aligned appropriately with credit offerings of alternative programs. For example, academic units should consider bundling courses as certificates and professional development sequences in non-credit packages that attract the working professional.

Financial Infrastructure

The budget challenges within publicly funded state universities have negatively impacted public higher education's mission and abilities as a whole. Louisiana is among the list of states with a challenging financial climate and less investment in higher education. As a result, there is an urgent need for UNO to create an entrepreneurial structure enabling the identification of revenue streams outside of the traditionally funded state budget models. The establishment of a fiscally self-sustained infrastructure will enable the university to create programs that meet student demand. Most specifically, UNO should build a strong foundation to meet the demand of learners not able to participate as fulltime on-ground students. The creation of cost recovery programs will allow UNO to generate new revenue streams and compete in the marketplace. A fiscally self-sustained program will provide a pathway for quality programs to compete with the market of higher education programs. Competition for students is fierce. The current climate in higher education makes self-sustainability necessary rather than only desirable.

Faculty should drive the curriculum and serve as the subject matter experts for all academic programs. The central unit should be accountable for providing environmental scans of programs to the colleges and faculty, as well as data to support faculty with new program direction and investment. Environmental scans include competitive reviews of peers. Program rates should be evaluated on an annual basis. The identification of market demand must be evaluated through real-time graduation and labor data. While the United States Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics is reliable data, the Consultant Team does not support its use as an effective source to measure real-time labor market demand. The Consultant Team believes that UNO would benefit from outsourcing with a company, such as Burning Glass. This specific company provides on-demand access to a technology platform to gain real-time labor insight. This type of insight will enable the central DE unit to produce demand reports that link current employment activities to specific degrees and certificates.

A fiscally self-sustained program should include a financial incentive program for faculty who are willing to invest in the institution and create innovative models of instruction to reach new markets. Colleges benefit from the ability to generate new revenue streams that exist outside of state resources. They are able to use those funds at their discretion. Some attention to reinvestment in both current programs and new programs is desirable. The incentives for a faculty member include the ability to gain overload compensation for teaching an online course, as well as course development compensation above normal workload. Additionally, faculty gain national and international recognition through the delivery of a course or program to an outside market.

A credible approach to building a financial incentive for new DE credit programs includes:

- A. Identification of a competitive DE rate consisting of a per credit hour tuition and DE fee
 - a. Charge the financial subcommittee within the DE Advisory Board/Committee to identify a competitive per credit hour rate and DE fee

- B. Revenue share of per credit hour tuition rate of 60/40%
 - a. 60% of revenue share would be managed by college deans at their discretion
 - b. 40% of revenue share would be managed at the Vice President level for overhead costs
- C. DE fees range from \$20-75 per credit hour
 - a. DE fee would support the central DE unit
 - b. DE fee would provide incentive funds to develop new DE programs through an institution-wide formal Request for Proposal (RFP)

Faculty investment recommendations include:

- A. Creation of an RFP process to facilitate new program innovation managed by the central DE unit
 - a. Identification of target market would be managed by central DE unit
 - b. Central DE unit would be accountable for the fiscal viability of programs
 - c. Fully costing for the delivery of cost recovery programs would be managed by the central DE unit
 - d. Funded proposals would be academic partners with the central DE unit
 - e. Partnership agreements would be formalized through memorandums of agreement
 - f. Contingency plans for failed projects should be clearly outlined
- B. Institution-wide RFP's include course development funds for faculty
 - a. Announced and distributed on a semester basis
 - b. Specify the approval process and launch dates
 - c. Charge the DE Advisory Board/Committee with approval process through deans and provost
 - d. Target existing on-ground niche programs for online and blended program development

Central DE unit recommendations include:

- A. Responsibility of a formal program needs assessment process
 - a. Conduct market research for identification of programs
- B. Accountability for marketing efforts
 - a. Develop and implement marketing plans
 - b. Align central DE unit branding with campus branding
 - c. Provide and support DE website
- C. Coordination of activities between the central DE unit and colleges
 - a. Provide data-driven recommendations on recruitment and retention plans
- D. Provide student services
 - a. Utilize and analyze Customer Relationship Management system
 - b. Track and route prospective student inquiries as appropriate

- c. Ensure student support for services including financial aid, admission, registration, tutoring, technical support, and career services
- E. Central scheduling processes
 - a. Alignment with the scheduling of courses based on student demand
 - b. Data-driven decisions for determining the fiscal sustainability of program offerings
- F. Generation of regular enrollment and fiscal report
 - a. Enrollment reports should be coordinated with campus enrollment management area
- G. Ensure high-quality program offerings
 - a. Utilize professional Instructional Designers
 - i. Parallel work with the newly developing Center for Teaching Innovation
 - ii. Outsource instructional design as necessary
 - b. Support faculty training activities
 - c. Obtain licenses for instructional materials and software
 - d. Support evaluation tools, such as the Quality Scorecard and Online Program Evaluation Program Implementation Checklist
 - e. Provide access to credible professional associations, such as the University Professional and Continuing Education Association

Online Learning

Online learning is the focus of growth in higher education at this time. This segment is growing five times faster than the whole of higher education in the United States, and it represents an even more rapidly growing segment of professional and continuing education both nationally and internationally. Best practices in this field do not suggest separating the leadership, development and support of online initiatives between the DE and the rest of the university. Rather, synergies and economies are created through coordinating efforts to marshal the best staff members and technologies to meet the needs of the entire university. In order to excel in this growth area, an institution needs vision; leadership; effective planning; strategy and management. The benefits of online learning are not found in lower delivery costs, but rather in the new and expanded markets of learners than can be reached.

Our recommendations for the online learning initiative include:

- A. *A clear vision for the future of online learning at the University must be developed.* This should involve a university-wide exercise to examine the future of role of online, blended and technology-enhanced learning across the curriculum, including a central DE unit. This should be regularly re-visited and updated in the strategic plan for the university. Online learning must not be ignored or marginalized; it is a significant part of the delivery of the curriculum in the 21st century.

- B. *A locus for the vision, leadership, planning, management, and strategic implementation of online and technology-enhanced learning should be established.* This should be centered in one location rather than dispersed among colleges. The current model appears to duplicate services across the university and seems to fall significantly short of coordinating vision and leadership in this area. If the university is to succeed in this area, it must pull together in support of a coordinated effort to best leverage 21st century technologies and pedagogies in delivery of the curriculum.
- C. *We understand that a Center for Teaching Innovation for the development and support of online learning (and associated technology-enhanced learning) has been newly established.* The Consultant Team strongly supports this initiative as it is inefficient and counter-productive to support multiple centers. A duplication of staff and services leads to diluted quality and effectiveness as well as competition. The lack of a faculty development team at UNO was particularly concerning for the development of DE programs. A key element of supporting faculty members to conceptualize, design and develop online classes includes a central development unit. The primary mission of a development center would be to serve the faculty needs across the campus. The central DE unit should work in parallel with the newly established Center.
- D. *All University classes should use the same learning management system.* This system is centrally-supported by IT; however, there is a lack of communication between the colleges, DE leadership, and the Office of the CIO. This challenge presents a disconnection in regard to the possibility of multiple LMS venues. This is a best practice that has been broadly implemented across the country since hurricane Katrina closed dozens of university campuses in 2005. Creating an alternative delivery mode for classes is insurance against disruptions in enrollments (and tuition revenue) in cases of natural and man-made disasters. A strategic approach to sunseting all but one LMS system should be established with a date to move all resources, both financial and human capital, to supporting and development in a single LMS system.
- E. *Investment in the conceptualization, development and deployment of new online classes is far below peer institutions and should be expanded.* A lack of appropriate investment will result in programs and courses that are not of the quality and sophistication that competing universities offer. Expected ROI should be a part of the evaluation of any new suggested program to determine where resources should be allocated.
- F. *Online learning class section sizes that average only eleven students fall far short of efficient and effective delivery of learning; they should, in most cases, be doubled.* Nationally, the standard class size is 25 for online learning with exceptions for small graduate seminars, some writing-intensive classes, and other classes with special needs and circumstances that demand small class size. Larger than 25 student classes can be effectively used in sections where the pedagogy and practices rely less on student interaction and more on performance (e.g., certain mathematics and other quantitative classes where the instructor-to-student interaction may be the predominant mode of

engagement). Smaller class sizes generate less revenue and provide a significantly reduced opportunity for the student-to-student interaction that research tells us is important to building quality learning outcomes. Nominal online learning class sizes should be adjusted to at least 20 students. ROI should be examined to determine appropriate class cancellations or class additions to ensure effectiveness in use of resources.

- G. *An emphasis should be placed on entire degree and certificate programs offered online to students at a distance.* The fiscal benefit of offering online learning comes with the addition of “net new” students. These are best realized only through the offering of entire degree or certificate programs at a distance. Offering “one-off” online classes provide only marginal financial benefits to the institution and typically are taken by students who would likely have enrolled in on-campus classes. The exception to this is in the case of summer session in which many universities have been able to strategically utilize online learning to speed the average time to degree completion by offering required, oversubscribed, and popular classes to students who have returned home for the summer from other universities, or to UNO student who may be travelling away from New Orleans for the summer.

In sum, the Consultant Team recognized significant opportunities for growth and innovation in the area of online and distance learning at the UNO. As suggested, we identified an assortment of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats in this area:

Strengths of the program:

- A cadre of experienced and effective contingent faculty members
- Many interesting and successful online classes that draw significant enrollments
- Unique location of a metropolitan public university within the historically-rich city of New Orleans.
- Attracts and supports a diverse national and international population

Weaknesses of the program:

- Lack of strategic approach to online learning
- Lack of integration of full-time faculty members
- Lack of apparent coordination between DE and the colleges in creating a comprehensive vision of UNO online initiatives
- Lack of entire degree and certificate programs offered at a distance resulting in reduced net new students
- Lack of an aggressive summer session online program is a missed opportunity to speed degree completion and add significant revenue

Opportunities for the program:

- Enormous opportunities exist for the program to collaborate with the rest of the University, creating a more cohesive relationship of shared value across the campus

- Centralized DE Unit will provide university-wide support and leadership for online learning
- A strong online program will generate new revenues for UNO, as well as provide academic opportunities to the New Orleans region

Threats for the program:

- Memories of previously failed attempts of continuing education programs threaten future success
- Culture of “us” (traditional education) versus “them” (continuing and online education)
- Loss of competitiveness in the marketplace to other institutions providing online learning
- Lack of staff, resources (financial and human), faculty buy-in, and strong leadership within each college to properly develop and sustain innovative programs.

Summer Session

The Consultant Team noted the absence of a centralized summer term operation, and suggests that this might be an important vacuum for a central unit to fill. While the provost’s office might assume nominal responsibility for summer offerings, typically a central DE unit, especially at major, urban research universities assumes this role with full accountability for its performance. The advantages are numerous:

- A robust summer session requires systematic planning and oversight to ensure that the full array of student needs are addressed.* Summer term offerings should not be left to the sporadic willingness of academic departments to accommodate the needs of their own majors or, worse yet, the individual preferences of their own faculty. This needs to be owned centrally as an ongoing exercise for the greater good of the institution.
- The provost’s office should undertake a review of the amount and variety of transfer credit requested once undergraduates matriculate.* UNO students are now voting with their feet – by transferring credit from other institutions to reduce their dependency on their primary institution based on their own need for flexibility and desire to control their pathway toward degree completion. This exercise will be very telling – and will inform the administration of where unintended outsourcing might be occurring and how that might be redressed by summer courses owned and operated by the UNO. Specific classes that are transferred in on a regular basis should be reviewed for mode of delivery, faculty expertise, time/place of delivery, and other components that will indicate why students are choosing alternative university offerings.

This represents both a financial loss and a quality question, as parts of the undergraduate experience routinely seep out into other academic institutions. Some of

this loss can be permanent – when students leave the university permanently before graduating. Some of this loss can be through accepting credit from schools not comparable to the UNO. Summer Term is an important element in student retention and time to degree completion. Creating an understanding and self-consciousness of this phenomenon is a first step to addressing that leakage.

- C. *A centralized Summer Session administrative unit is needed to provide a highly visible university-wide service, by establishing the course offerings (in consultation with academic departments) and administering the operations.* The DE central unit should be charged with centralizing the preparations and offerings for summer. Key summer preparations include identifying high-demand courses, establishing an instructional budget based on a financial incentive model, and developing a local and national marketing summer session campaign aligned with the institution’s marketing campaign.
- D. *Summer Term is not only a means of reducing leakage of current students, but a way to attract new students to the university. The central unit should be charged with creating a marketing and curricular plan to recruit high school students, local students attending other institutions, international students who want to spend a quarter in State, and online students beyond the State area.* The goal should be to accommodate current University students to ensure their continuation and success and to supplement this base with a large cadre of visiting students. The first group can help raise the graduation rate and the second can promote future matriculation in the University’s programs. In short, a summer term operation under the mandate of the central unit will provide a fundamental role in the core mission of the University in recruiting and retaining traditional-age, full-time students, as well as serving the non-traditional population.
- E. Recommendation:
 - a. The leadership should create a summer redesign task force to draw on the experiences of campus staff and faculty that have championed summer and online offerings.
 - i. Consider including representatives from science and engineering, as well as business due to the significant summer enrollment in these specific majors.
 - ii. Include support unit leaders, such as financial aid, marketing, bursar, and enrollment management
 - b. Charge the summer redesign task force to:
 - i. Design a financial incentive model aligned with the DE incentive model
 - ii. Centralize the central operations within the DE unit

Program Opportunities

Table 1: New Online Programs

Suggested Programs	Considerations
<p><i>International Business Track and/or Degree Undergraduate & Graduate</i></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop a strong, but straightforward vision for the DE/SS unit that aligns with the institutional vision. 2. Create a leadership team to drive the DE /SS initiatives across campus. 3. Those leading DE/SS should seek to build relationships with academic and administrative units across campus to integrate DE/SS into the fabric of the university community and brand. 4. Set measurable performance goals for the unit. 5. Use metrics and data analytics to determine the level by which performance goals are achieved. 6. Review policies that create barriers to student enrollments and learning. Create a team that will work with unit leadership to remove barriers as quickly as possible within the governance structure.
<p><i>Health Informatics Certificate and/or Degree Undergraduate & Graduate</i></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. One of the top degrees in the country. 2. Blends computer science, healthcare, and information systems to create a highly marketable cross-disciplinary degree.
<p><i>Coastal Engineering Undergraduate & Graduate With stackable certificates</i></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Establish scalable practices with academic units. 2. Develop workload and compensation policies that are sustainable and not based on external funding such as grants. 3. Develop a policy regarding ownership of course materials and intellectual property rights and securities. 4. Maintain ongoing technology support. 5. Maintain ongoing instructional design and course production support. 6. Implement measurable quality assessment of DE/SS. 7. Implement DE/SS faculty evaluation policies.
<p><i>Hotel Hospitality & Tourism Management Undergraduate & Graduate Certificate in Event Planning</i></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Take advantage of a strong New Orleans basis to improve the employability of hotel industry career-seekers. 2. Work with a cadre of high-end hotels to develop the curriculum and enhance faculty.
<p><i>Special Education Graduate Degree</i></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Take advantage of strong faculty in this area to provide Special Education study at the graduate level for current K-12 licensure holders. 2. One of the most sought after degrees in education.

<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Bachelor's Degree Completion</i></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Strategically choose 3 tracks to provide degree completion such as Business, Philosophy, and Mathematics. (Base programs on needs assessment with Community College partners). 2. Consider an Interdisciplinary Studies program with strong policy parameters, faculty, and marketing vision to make successful. 3. Consistent admissions policies with generous transfer credit. 4. Develop strong relationships with Delgado Community College and other Community Colleges to provide a pipeline of students. 5. Market with robust UNO brand and quality.
<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Robust Online Summer Session</i></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Strategically select courses that will move students forward toward degree completion.

Baccalaureate Degree Completion Programs

The Consultant Team believes the House Concurrent Resolution No.161 of 2015 provides the necessary legislative foundation for UNO to develop online bachelor degree completion programs. Bachelor degree completion programs provide access for adult learners to a high quality educational experience at one of Louisiana’s public universities. Many in the New Orleans area have had their access to public education restricted since Hurricane Katrina. Bachelor Degree Completion in competitive areas would strength access by returning and transferring adult learners.

Recognizing that UNO offers one of the few online B.A. degrees in Philosophy in the U. S., is an advantage that UNO can build on through the rebranding of the bachelor degree option. Additional, highly marketable bachelor degree options in Business (BBA) and hospitality should be considered after a thorough market study is conducted. Resources should be allocated, both to the internal market, as well as externally, to fully meet the potential of attracting new student to bachelor degree completion programs. This would also sustain the diversity of UNO's academic offerings and thus its portfolio. A key factor in the success of bachelor degree completion programs would be the creation of articulation agreements with community colleges. Most specifically, a renewed relationship with Delgado Community College would provide a student funnel to completion programs

UNO, with robust undergraduate and graduate programs, plus a new investment in Summer Session as discussed elsewhere in this report, will make for a richer tapestry of learning opportunities for learners in the New Orleans area, as well as online students across the country. This would also expand UNO's revenue and contribution. To accomplish such a strategy the Consultant Team recommends the following:

- A. Review existing on campus bachelor degree completion programs for reaching a larger audience;
 - 1. Review policies in granting transfer credit
 - 2. Allow for greater promotion of alternative credit evaluation such as CLEP and PLA
 - 3. Determine expertise in faculty and adjunct ranks to determine the viability of offering the degree nationally through distance learning.

- B. Consider providing tracks for the bachelor of interdisciplinary studies program that will lead students toward specific program completion targets, as well as specific employment goals aligned to the national Gainful Employment regulations.
 - 1. Simply, promoting the possibility of academic concentrations within the program will not recruit a sustainable audience. The Consultant Team recommends the faculty consider designing specific pathways that explain the concentrations of health management, business, social sciences and education. A specific number of months to completion and cost per program should be outlined on the website, as well as used in marketing materials to capitalize on the bachelor degree completion strategy.
 - 2. Rename the bachelor of interdisciplinary studies program to emphasize the completion possibilities for adult learners, as well as the prescriptive pathways. We recommend naming the completion degree in a manner that will attract adult learners. We recommend the faculty consider the degree names listed below.
 - i. Bachelor of General Studies
 - ii. Bachelor of Arts Degree program, Interdisciplinary focus
 - iii. Bachelor of Professional Studies
 - iv. Bachelor of Organizational Studies

- C. Degree program considerations discussion:
 - 1. Hotel online program should meet the needs of the New Orleans community well – UNO should consider partnering with a hotel chain that will lend expertise and support to the program while encouraging their own employees to take advantage of educational opportunity.
 - 2. Engineering – this high quality, well-staffed area is one that could be a leader with an online component. Engineering remains a highly sought after degree program and there may be niches in both undergraduate, as well as graduate programming to consider.
 - 3. A selective common core course work that will be more effective and efficient for ROI should be considered for all students entering at a specific level (undergraduate or graduate) – These courses can be co-sponsored through an interdisciplinary approach for the distance delivery of the core classes. Creating synergies between and among departments to eliminate unnecessary scheduling of duplicate courses. For example, if

three programs require a research class, create one research class that all students may take. Writing, math, science, and other courses may be utilized to assist with undergraduate degree completion. The same type of synergies may be present for graduate classes, especially those related to general research or general writing. The UNO Registrar indicated to the Consulting Team that 50% of tuition is currently derived from core coursework. This would need to be reviewed as a strategy for degree completion is created, along with a specific policy related to transfer credit and admissions standards that each program could adopt.

- D. Addressing a retention issue with students who take general education courses, with the intent to transfer to other institutions should be reviewed. When students take general education, they often do not intend to follow through on a program of study at that institution. The Consulting Team suggests the creation of student focus groups to discuss this issue. A strong student group could lead this process, perhaps the Student Government Association would be interested in discovering why so many student transfer. Is it a support issue, or other issue that can be remedied, or is it a branding/perception issue? Data should be collected from the registrar's office to determine 1. Where students are sending their transfer credit and in which disciplines; and 2. Who are the top institutions from which UNO is accepting transfer credit and in which disciplines.
- E. Upgrade the degree completion program quality with greater usage of university faculty and graduate students teaching in the program, and greater investment in the quality of the online learning experience;
- F. Move to a national marketing strategy with a goal of significantly increasing the number of out-of-state enrollments – this does not mean necessarily print ads. Some print ads are desirable to consider building brand, but additional digital ads are necessary to truly build a digital face for UNO.
- G. Continue to address roadblocks, including legislative, to admissions and enrollment.
 - 1. Admission criteria needs to be established by UNO, which knows its adult students best and has the expertise to create the most appropriate standards to ensure academic success.
 - 2. Review the current Prior Learning Assessment and CLEP testing policies. Review with faculty representatives and consider a more robust approach to assigning prior learning credit.
 - 3. Reduce the time for degree completion through more robust and flexible online summer and winter offerings
 - 4. Provide prescriptive pathways that meet the gainful employment rules and regulations and provide a recruitment tool for admissions in recruiting new students to specific programs of study.

5. Develop a transfer site for ease of matriculation between the community colleges and UNO. Develop strong transfer agreements that are as standardized as possible to accept new students.
6. Design stronger pathways between community colleges and UNO to work collaboratively to promote academic progression for all levels of healthcare with specific pathways shared with medical facilities, other educational partners, and prospective students.
7. Agreements with community colleges should be updated and re-approved by both boards including media promotion as signatures are obtained at both institutions – but especially with Delgado Community Colleges. This type of collaborative promotion with media is a marketing tool, community tool, and enrollment tool.
8. Develop distance partnerships with Delgado Community College specifically with their hybrid and online courses offerings. Promote as a pathway to an online degree completion opportunity for students.

Graduate Programs

1. Great opportunities exist for stand-alone and stackable certificate options in graduate programs.
2. Design an Event Planning Certificate within the Master's Degree in Hospitality and Tourism Management.
3. Build Post-Baccalaureate programs to expand portfolio particularly in the healthcare field. Groups of pre-med courses (already available for baccalaureate students) for post-bac students would be one option to focus in this area.
4. Many of the administrative functions (marketing, student and faculty services, etc.) are recommended to be merged and overseen by the central DE unit, to create more robust capacity and expertise in critical (especially in the adult market) areas such as marketing and to improve ROI. There is also an opportunity to cross-list courses, using courses across academic programs to provide students with access to a broader array of courses offered by DE. The DE unit and colleges could keep their individual identity but at the same time benefit by sharing expertise and resources.
5. Special education remains a high need area. Special Education is one of UNO's high quality, well-staffed areas. We suggest consideration of a graduate program for teachers already certified in Special Education who want to expand their knowledge of teaching special needs children especially those on the autism spectrum would be very appropriate.
6. The degree designations (MAS and MLS) are less competitive language terms in graduate programs. Students entering the programs and employers hiring graduates are looking for degree titles and designations that they know and trust. The current designations represent an obstacle for prospective students and do not reflect well on the quality of the programs. The current designations seems a mismatch for UNO's

brand. We recommend changing degree designations to MS or MA, as appropriate to the course of study.

7. Graduate programs simply cannot rely on all adjuncts. Highly qualified fulltime faculty are required to increase quality, perhaps teaching on an overload basis or—in some cases—as part of a joint appointment or the “buy out” of workload options. Consider a Master Teacher model as fulltime faculty are brought into the graduate programs.
8. Graduate certificate programs should comprise of no more than 16 hours and 4 courses of study to achieve completion of a stackable certificate.

Private Industry Partnerships

Significant opportunities exist with partnerships between private industry and UNO. *UNO partnerships with private industry will require central management of binding agreements that outline measurable actions and expectations of partners.* As the Consultant Team recommended earlier in this report, the DE oversight committee should include private industry leaders. The engagement of these leaders will enable the identification of subject matter to create an alignment between DE programs and needs of local industry.

Strategic partnerships with a focus on increasing value for the industry and workforce should include opportunities for collaborative research, workforce credentialing, and internship opportunities. By partnering with UNO, private industry will ensure their current and future workforce is prepared to meet the demands of their roles. UNO’s support of private industry will increase their ability to renew global competitiveness and demonstrate commitment to the workforce. Ultimately, UNO partnerships with private industry will positively impact the local economy and community, as well as increase the student population.

The Consultant Team recommends the following actions.

- A. *The central DE unit must support colleges in the offering of professional/applied master’s and graduate certificate programs that target the needs of private industry.* This will integrate DE more into the UNO community, provide a new source of revenue and allow UNO to offer new graduate programs in alternative manners. DE should provide faculty and private industry leaders with an awareness of innovative program opportunities that broaden their reach and improve the quality of academic programs. Partnership agreements with local private industry should be considered with the following:
 - a. Executive Online Master of Science Degree in Hospitality and Tourism Management
 - i. Creation of an event management stand-alone and stackable certificate
 - b. Coastal Engineering and Sciences Certificates
 - i. Forming partnerships with coastal off-shore industries will create student funnels for enrollment and research

- B. *Charge the DE Advisory Board/Committee to conduct a series of survey interviews with local private industry leaders.* The contribution of local leaders will set the foundation to identify potential needs for technology-enhanced programming. Key areas for program development should be identified by faculty, while private industry leaders give voice for new and emerging subject matter that will grow the local economy.
- C. *Consider technology-enhanced opportunities for student internships and mentoring programs with local private industry leaders.* Faculty should identify opportunities for students to work directly with mentors on real-world research projects. UNO is set in a highly unique location offering rich opportunities in, but not limited to, engineering, maritime industry, oil refinement, business, tourism, and film industry. Utilizing technology through DE programs would broaden the reach of local private industry to attract non-traditional students, such as working professionals, adult learners, and military students.
- D. *Identify private industry opportunities to support scholarship funds for adult learners participating in DE programs.* Adult learners are, particularly, challenged to financially support families while completing their educational goals. UNO should partner with industry to offer fiscal support for scholarships that supplement adult learners pursuing degrees.

Course Management

It is important that leadership set a minimum and maximum enrollment for courses. First, so many small courses compromises the quality and richness of the classroom or online experience. Secondly, it creates an overabundance of course offerings that might confuse or overwhelm the public. Third, a low class size does not justify a faculty investment in quality preparation, especially for online courses. Fourth, a plethora of offerings creates an unnecessary sellers' market for part-time faculty. Fifth, such a low average suggests a lack of planning, oversight, and discipline in managing the curriculum.

At the same time, the surfeit of courses now creates an important opportunity. *We propose that a target class mean of twenty be set – with the possibility of moving even higher in the future in appropriate classes.* This can be accomplished by carefully reviewing the current programs, enrollment numbers, and programs with growth potential. Some programs may need to be taught-out, some may need to be revised and streamlined. Courses that are taught for several programs may be taught as part of a core curriculum approach to ensure efficiencies. For instance, if general statistics or research courses are needed in several degree programs, consider offering a single section that students are enrolled into regardless of their individual major.

There is a tipping point for adult learners when too many choices and uncertainties actually become alienating. Working adults require assurance that, with minimal anxiety and planning,

they can complete a degree in a reasonable time frame. Too many decisions and unknowns can be counterproductive and off-putting. Clear pathways to complete online degrees should be established and shared with potential and current students, faculty, and advisors.

The investment in building online courses needs to be dramatically increased to ensure high quality. The graduate online courses, those currently offered and those to be developed, need to move from a purely asynchronous model to an asynchronous/synchronous model with significantly more multi-media, interactive capability. A model for course evaluation should be adopted such as Quality Matters, Chico State Online Quality Rubric, Community of Inquiry or other evaluatory rubrics that align with an institutional approach to quality review.

We propose the following steps:

- A. *Conduct a thorough and thoughtful review of each UNO academic program to test its viability and design.* Each should be examined for its potential to achieve an average class size of at least twenty, and redesigned or eliminated as a result of this analysis. The Academic Directors should be charged with this task and evaluated by their success in streamlining their programs and in using this opportunity to provide greater clarity to their student markets and elevate academic quality and reputation. A higher bar than just covering part-time instructional costs should be employed to determine the future of each program. At a certain point, too many programs, with under-enrolled courses, appears as confusing clutter to the public and implies a lack of leadership to the University at large. .
- B. *Create and publish “carousels” for each program so that courses are offered at prescribed times – in each modality – so students can plan when to enroll, and so curricular redundancy can be eliminated.* The end product would be clear publications and web sites for each program with guarantees for how long an efficient student can complete a program. Pathways to program completion with multiple starting points demonstrated throughout the year not only encourage enrollment, but also retention in academic programs.
- C. *Conduct a review of the best adjunct faculty so that this can become an exercise in reducing the current adjunct pool to only the very best.* This will create an important juncture to elevate instructional quality, and shift the market of part-time faculty to the advantage of the University. Adjunct faculty development should be a strong component of faculty recruitment and retention. Adjunct faculty members do not typically receive many perks. A strong professional development network can become a recruiting perk and assist with establishing high quality instruction. Syllabi and grade distributions should be reviewed along with course evaluations. This review should not be based strictly on faculty popularity, nor on longevity and seniority – but on the strength of syllabi, commitment to teaching and students, and to high academic standards. This will test how well the Academic Directors know their faculty and how discerning they can be in promoting instructional quality. Adjunct faculty need strong

evaluation and review processes. Those who are underperforming should have action plans in place to increase/improve high quality teaching.

- D. *Use this faculty reduction process to better reward those adjuncts retained.* Those who make the cut for future employment might qualify for pay raises as a basis for elevating expectations. Some part-time faculty should be considered for full-time lectureships, with benefits.
- E. *Use this opportunity to set clear faculty standards for instructional rigor.* This should be seen as a quid pro quo for the privilege of teaching DE programs.
- F. *Use some of the expense savings to employ UNO full-time faculty through overloads.* These faculty members can serve as instructors of record, master teachers who oversee clusters of courses in a particular field, and as faculty coordinators of graduate programs. This will create critically important opportunities to identify subject matter experts among the University's full-time faculty and to partner with them and their departments to monitor quality. A related objective should be to find ways of involving advanced doctoral students in DE teaching. This might include TA appointments to online programs.
- G. *Leadership within the central DE unit should be charged with creating ongoing events for exchange among those teaching in a shared discipline.* A smaller, better rewarded, and more committed and capable adjunct pool along with key members of the full-time faculty will now create new opportunities for interaction. FT faculty members, as well as adjuncts and TA's should be invited to participate together in shared professional development activities to strengthen departmental bonds among teaching faculty.
- H. *Establish a DE principle and practice that no graduate master's program should be offered without some full-time faculty involvement and oversight.* This will be a strong statement to make in the local competitive market, and within the University itself. Again, distance education's most fundamental issue is its detachment and isolation from the University at large – and this will better integrate and showcase DE's programs within their academic community.

Compliance

There are several compliance issues related to online learning. The challenge is that each state can charge a fee for processing applications. This can become extremely costly to an institution. State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements (SARA) SARA is overseen by a National Council and administered by four regional education compacts. SARA assists with reciprocity agreements by charging an annual membership fee but allows the institutions to then receive reciprocity in the other SARA states without filing either the additional paperwork or paying the additional fees.

There are some limitations to SARA, for example, licensure and internship programs are not covered in the reciprocity agreements. The alternative to SARA is to review and continuously monitor each state's website where you believe you will want to be able to enroll students and begin the application process at each individual state. The labor for this process is intense and there is a fee associated with almost all state application processes.

- A. *UNO should join the SARA through the respective regional compact.* As of the date of this report, there are 30 states participating in SARA and 13 approved SARA institutions within the State of Louisiana. A central unit within the institution should monitor both the benefits, as well as the limitations and the necessary actions related to remaining compliant.

Action Items Checklist

Table 2: Action Items Checklist

Action Item	Desired Outcome
<i>Advocacy</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop a strong, but straightforward vision for the DE/SS unit that aligns with the institutional vision. 2. Create a leadership team to drive the DE /SS initiatives across campus. 3. Those leading DE/SS should seek to build relationships with academic and administrative units across campus to integrate DE/SS into the fabric of the university community and brand. 4. Set measurable performance goals for the unit. 5. Use metrics and data analytics to determine the level by which performance goals are achieved. 6. Review policies that create barriers to student enrollments and learning. Create a team that will work with unit leadership to remove barriers as quickly as possible within the governance structure.
<i>Entrepreneurial Initiatives</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify institutional brand and DE/SS connection to the brand. 2. Appropriately resource faculty who are critical to the DE/SS success. 3. Mobilize marketing, recruitment, and enrollment teams to effectively plan, strategize, and implement strategies. 4. Work effectively on performance measures, budgets, and resource allocation.
<i>Faculty Support</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Establish scalable practices with academic units. 2. Develop workload and compensation policies that are sustainable and not based on external funding such as grants. 3. Develop a policy regarding ownership of course materials and intellectual property rights and securities.

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Maintain ongoing technology support. 5. Maintain ongoing instructional design and course production support. 6. Implement measurable quality assessment of DE/SS. 7. Implement DE/SS faculty evaluation policies.
<i>Student Support</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop matrices that will measure student completion, student satisfaction, and student retention in DE/SS programs. 2. Ensure high quality DE/SS learning opportunities. 3. Provide strong student support services in admissions, financial aid, advisement, tutoring, library services, etc.
<i>Technology</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Create an auditable list of technologies and services available to academic partners 2. Develop a needs assessment for use with new programs to determine technologies needed to appropriately, teach, evaluate, and collect data for internal and external use related to DE/SS. 3. Create environment to test and try new technologies as available with consultation services to assist faculty. 4. Develop strong security and systems integrity.
<i>Compliance</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Join SARA in preparation of increasing online program offerings. 2. Review SACS accreditation requirements for DE. 3. Review Financial Aid requirements related to students ability to borrow dollars toward tuition. 4. Review current policies related to accessibility and residency. 5. Review current policies related to degree completion and residency. 6. Adapt policies as needed.

Future Items for Consideration

- A. Executive education online and blended programs may be a future area for growth.
- B. Create international agreements for full-pay students.
- C. Consider a complete review and reconstruction of the International Student Center. Eliminate practice of significant discounts for International Students.
- D. Renegotiate contracts with the international student partners.
- E. Create an International English Language Program that meets the requirements for accreditation (<http://www.cea-accredit.org/>) and is self-supporting.

Appendices

- A. Itinerary
- B. Bio Dr. Gayla Stoner
- C. Bio Dr. Vickie S. Cook

Appendix A: Itinerary

August 3, 2015	Activity
8:00 – 8:30am	Meeting with John Nicklow, Provost and Vice President
8:30 – 9:00am	Meeting with Norm Whitley, Interim Associate Provost and Bill Sharpton, Emeritus
9:15 – 10:30am	Meeting with Dan Gonzalez, Distance Education
10:45 – 12:00pm	Meeting with Current Faculty Partners: Rob Stufflebeam, Philosophy; Janet Crane, Associate Librarian; Gilda Reed, Department of Psychology; Lori Mancuso, Instructor of Mathematics; Kim Williams, Associate Professor of Hotel, Restaurant & Tourism; Jan Janz, Associate Professor of Special Education & Habilitative Services; Gianna Cothren, Professor in Civil & Environmental Engineering; Malay Hajra, Assistant Professor in Civil & Environmental Engineering
12:00 – 2:00pm	Planning Hour and Debriefing
2:15 – 3:15pm	Meeting with Ann Lockridge, Director of Financial Aid
6:00pm	Dinner with John Nicklow

August 4, 2015	Activity
8:30 – 9:30am	Meeting with Dan Gonzalez, Distance Education
9:45 – 10:45am	Meeting with Matt Moore, Registrar
11:00 – 11:45am	Meeting with CIO, Dave Dupree
12:00 – 1:00pm	Meeting with Deans (John Williams, Dean College of Business; Miriam Daunis, Assistant Dean College of Sciences; Kevin Graves, Interim Dean College of Liberal Arts & College of Education and Human Development; Emir Macari, College of Engineering; Lora Amsberryaugier, Dean of Library)
1:15 – 2:00pm	Meeting with Sarah Bergez, Director of Marketing
2:00 – 3:00pm	Meeting with Elizabeth Blankenship, Moodle
3:00 – 4:00pm	Meeting with Non-Partners Faculty Group: Wendy Schluchter, Professor of Biology; Dinah Payne, Professor of Management & Marketing; D’Lane Compton, Associate Professor of Sociology; Cory Dumesnil, Instructor of Mathematics; Kim Jovanovich, Assistant Dean of Engineering; James Mokhiber, Associate Professor of History; Peter Schock, Professor of English; Robert Parker, Professor of Accounting; Paul Herrington, Professor of Mechanical Engineering; Lura Williamson, Biological Sciences
4:15 – 4:45pm	Wrap up – John Nicklow, Norm Whitley, Bill Sharpton, and President Fos

Appendix B: Bio Dr. Gayla Stoner

Dr. Gayla Stoner is the Executive Director for the School of Continuing Studies at the University of Illinois at Chicago. She directs the School's credit and non-credit program offerings within a major research public research university. The world-class university is the largest in the Chicago area. The School's mission is the delivery of innovative and transformative programs for all learners.

The School has a special focus on international students through the direction and support of the Tutorium for Intensive English. Dr. Stoner previously served as the founding director of the SIU Extended Campus at Southern Illinois University. In this role, she provided oversight for the university-wide development of on-campus and off-campus/hybrid special session initiatives, including summer and winter sessions.

She was selected as an Emerging Leader by the Penn State/Sloan-C Institute for Emerging Leadership for Online Learning in 2011. She was awarded the Charles V. Evans Scholarship award in 2005. She has served on national committees and currently serves as Vice-President of the Illinois Council on Continuing Higher Education; a member of the University Professionals & Continuing Education Association (UPCEA). Dr. Stoner's research areas include enabling learner access and flexibility through innovative postsecondary education, including adult learning programs and Registered Apprenticeship Programs.

Appendix C: Bio Vickie S. Cook

Dr. Vickie Cook is the Director of the Center for Online Learning, Research and Service (COLRS) and Associate Research Professor in the College of Education at the University of Illinois Springfield.

Dr. Cook has been actively engaged providing consulting and faculty development with educational leaders across the U.S. and in Mexico. Her work has been published in a variety of national educational publications. She worked as part of a team that authored the UPCEA Hallmarks of Excellence.

Her current research agenda focuses on two areas. First, exploring mobile learning through a heutagogical lens and also the impact of a systems approach for online leadership. She teaches online in the Teaching English as a Second Language concentration of the Masters of Arts in Education program at University of Illinois Springfield.

Dr. Cook has served on several regional and national committees, as well as having been a long time member of Illinois Council on Continuing Higher Education (ICCHE) serving in multiple roles on the Executive Board and currently serves as President of the organization; a member of the University Professionals & Continuing Education Association (UPCEA); serves as a mentor for the Association for Continuing and Higher Education (ACHE); is a member of the Online Learning Consortium (OLC) and serves on program steering committees for the OLC Annual Conference and Midwest Collaborate conference.