

As a group we are interested in researching instructional modes as they relate to each other and how institutions use different delivery modes to promote and execute educational programs as they relate to each mode of instruction. We feel that online education is sometimes questioned as to how reliable and credible the education is that institutions are giving. Our research will prove that the institutional modes (Single, Dual, Mixed and Consortia) all relate to one another in the following ways:

- All provide online courses for students
- All cater to the needs of the student, are learner-centered
- All promote distance education as it provides flexible learning for professional adults

This report contains our findings and explains the institutional modes as they are similar to one another even though they may offer different methods of learning to students.

### Single Mode Institutions

Single mode institutions are colleges and universities that only offer courses that are taught at a distance, that do not have face-to-face teaching sessions. Institutions solely focus on teaching and learning at a distance and tend to promote flexible learning environments and lifelong learning while being able to service students in many areas around the world in mass numbers.

The following is a comparison of five single mode institutions and includes Athabasca University in Canada, Open University of Catalonia in Spain, Capella

University in the United States, FernUniversität in Germany, and University of South Africa in South Africa.

Athabasca University is located in Canada and is the leading single mode university in the country. The college currently has about 37,000 students enrolled in their degree programs that include certificate programs, bachelors, masters and doctorate degrees. The institution promotes learning at a distance and the main goal is to remove the barriers that may stand in people's way of furthering their education. "Athabasca University makes it possible for you to earn a university education regardless of where you live or work, or your commitments to careers or families. The University strives to remove the barriers of time, space, past educational experience, and, to a great degree, level of income." (Athabasca University, 2008, para. 2) The university promotes students to study at a distance since it would be a more convenient and flexible way of learning. While the college offers degree programs online, students also utilize textbooks, CD-ROM, audiocassette tapes and video tapes to enhance the learning experience. Support is offered to students in the form of a help desk, a library, an information center, advisors and counsellors as well as access for students with disabilities.

Open University of Catalonia is located in Spain and offers diplomas, undergraduate degrees, graduate degrees, and a PhD program on the Information and Knowledge Society. The university has an enrollment rate of 54,245 students in the 2007-2008 year. The institution promotes online learning by expanding on the use of the Internet (a virtual campus), study materials/textbooks and CD-ROMs produced by the

university. Support for those delivery methods includes the virtual library, territorial center and personal counselors. The main goal of the institution is to provide students with life long learning and education. “The educational model of the UOC facilitates access to learning resources from any place and at any time, in a way that permits education to be integrated in people's lives.” (Open University of Catalonia, 2008, para. 6) Like Athabasca University, the institution promotes distance learning by stating that it is a flexible and convenient way to learn, making the method more appealing to potential students.

Capella University is located in the United States. The university currently has about 23,700 students enrolled in its programs. Programs offered by the university include certificate programs, bachelors, masters and doctoral degrees. Like Athabasca University and the Open University of Catalonia, Capella promotes online learning by stating that people can attend college while dealing with work and family life, meaning that distance learning is flexible and convenient. The university’s main statement is that it offers “respected degree programs in a rich, online learning environment so you can move forward without leaving the rest of your life behind.” (Capella University, 2008, para. 1) To assist students in achieving their educational goals, Capella has support such as a library, a writing center, technical support, advisors and counselors.

FernUniversität in Hagen, Germany has 45,688 students currently enrolled in courses at the university. The university offers undergraduate and graduate degree programs and doctorate degrees on an individual basis. FernUniversität promotes online learning as well as suggests that students should take advantage of their 60 plus study

centers in Germany and abroad if they need assistance. (FernUniversität, 2008, para. 3)  
Other support provided includes the library and an online support center called the Center for Media and IT. Online learning at the university is unique because it is primarily research based. The main goal of the institution is to provide students with the opportunity for life long learning.

University of South Africa (UNISA) is located in South Africa and currently has about 130,000 students. The main goal of the organization is to create a student-centered environment that offers flexibility and the opportunity for life long learning. The institution offers programs such as diplomas, certificates, bachelors, masters and doctorate degree programs. “The University of South Africa is the oldest distance-teaching university in the world, and before 1970 it was the only autonomous distance-teaching university anywhere.” (Peters, 2001, p. 183) UNISA paved the way for all other distance teaching universities by utilizing print-based materials, tutors, teleconferencing, videoconferencing and online learning. Learner support includes online support, over 600 examination centers, a library and technical support.

While all of the universities offer degree programs at a distance, the delivery modes differ from textbooks to videoconferencing to online learning, differ by the type of support offered to the students that utilize the delivery methods and also by the number of students they service. The institutions in some way or another promote distance education by referring to flexibility and life long learning creating interest for students that prefer independent learning or have busy lifestyles.

### Dual Mode Institutions

Schools are traditionally identified by the facilities they maintain, where students physically go in order to take courses and teachers provide instruction. With the inclusion of distance education techniques however, those same schools become dual mode institutions, capable of providing a similar learning experience, just not on a campus. While some functions within a dual mode institution may operate as separate entities, one area for conventional learning and another for distance education, faculty are often shared between the two. This helps support many institutions' premise that distance education classes are of the same quality as those offered at the school.

The following institutions that employ dual mode techniques were assessed: Deakin University in Australia, Thompson Rivers University in Canada, Nova Southeastern University in the United States, the University of Lagos in Nigeria, and the University of London in the United Kingdom.

Deakin University provides access to distance learning through a number of modern techniques with audio and video lecture services that include podcasts and downloadable MP3s. (Deakin University, 2008a, para. 4) Additionally, there is access to online conferencing and opportunities for comprehensive study materials. Otherwise, study materials may include study guides, reading lists, CDs and DVDs. While they promote themselves primarily as a brick and mortar school, there is strong support for online and off-campus studies including:

- Weekend schools – smaller facilities where students can go for assistance.

- Online support – within the virtual classroom, using technical services and the library, and personal issues such as tutors, career planning, and religious discussion.

Students who access the school through its distance learning program account for approximately one-third of its course enrollment, which equals 10,521 for both full-time and part-time. (Deakin University, 2008b) and have the ability to obtain bachelors, masters, and doctorate degrees. The school recognizes that those people with business or home commitments are the types of students it needs to cater to and it has developed flexible approaches in which students can customize their education so as to structure it around occupational goals.

Thompson Rivers University delivers its distance education program as paced and non-paced learning through both print and Web-based formats. Course materials may also include the use of audiocassettes, CDs, DVDs, videos, and other media. (Thompson Rivers University, 2008a, para. 12) Distance education students are aided through online technical services (traditional support, library services, etc.) but also receive help through student service advisors who can answer questions regarding school, degree, course requirements, and academic planning. Other services include help with study skills, tutors, and career planning along with a number of student interaction tools. Approximately 16,000 students are enrolled in the Open University campus each year in over 50 degree, diploma, and certificate programs. (Thompson Rivers University, 2008b, para. 3)

At Nova Southeastern University, the Web is used to access course materials, announcements, e-mail, distance library services, the Electronic Library, and for

interaction with faculty and fellow students through the use of e-mail, discussion boards, chat rooms, white boards, and multimedia formats. The information the university has with regard to its distance education program suggests that they are strongly behind their message, putting the material and courses on the same level as their main campus facility and satellite installations. Distance education students have access to off-campus student educational centers that assist students with computer labs, videoconferencing equipment, and staff that help students with registration, enrollment, and financial aid issues. (Nova Southeastern University, 2008, para. 2-13) The traditional undergraduate student population is approximately 5,000 students from all fifty states and forty-two other countries. About 1,200 students live on campus in six residential halls (making for approximately 3,600 commuting and distance learning students). (Peterson's, 2008, para. 3) Nova Southeastern University offers several courses and bachelor and masters degree programs through distance education. Additionally, it has distance learning capacity for continuing education programs as well as courses for pre-Kindergarten through grade 12 in high school. (Peterson's, 2008, para. 3-4)

University of Lagos Distance Learning Institute delivers distance courses through audio, video and text formats. Electronic study aids are available along with broadcast lectures and online communication forums. While students can quickly access basic information about the online program at the university, material regarding the more detailed nature of the school such as the courses and degree programs is not set up properly and hard to locate. The badly organized nature of this material gives the impression that the school is not as supportive as it pretends to be. When attending the university's online program, students are assigned to distance learning staff for guidance

and counseling. Additionally, there are study centers organized within and outside of Nigeria to support the needs of the distance students. (University of Lagos, 2008a, para. 4-10) The current student enrollment in the distance education program is over 6,000. Students take course examinations equivalent to those in the main university and receive the same recognition. (University of Lagos, 2008b, para. 9) Two-year, non-degree programs are available. Bachelors may be bestowed upon “mature” students over 25, provided they meet some criteria with respect to their work history, professional experience, and affiliations. Upon receiving proper consultation support, students can also study for a doctorate degree at the institute.

The University of London provides an online learning environment for students that may include discussion forums, online seminars, and interactive activities. For most courses, students can study independently at a pace that suits them. (University of London, 2008a, para. 3-7) While distance students attend specially designed courses to suit their needs, they achieve exactly the same internationally recognized qualification as those who attend the university itself. The distance learning program provides internationally recognized courses and diplomas for bachelors and masters degrees. To support its students’ needs, the university works with over 200 institutions in over 45 countries as well as commercial training providers, specialist mentoring services, and local drop-in centers. Additionally, there is online and in-person support from academics and course-specific assistance. (University of London, 2008b, para. 1-2) The university has over 40,000 students in more than 180 countries studying 100 different courses. (University of London, 2008c, para. 3-5) The university seeks to attract academically



minded students with diverse backgrounds and locations, and those who have financial, career or family commitments that make it impossible to physically attend the school.

There are differences in the approaches each dual mode institution uses to educate and communicate with its students, however the goals appear to be the same: to use the strength of their respective campuses to reinforce their ability to provide meaningful education. Higher-end technologies may vary between them, but many of what may be considered “core” online learning techniques are practiced at all sites. This helps promote a standard that will evolve as student and institution needs change.

#### Mixed Mode Institutions

Mixed mode (or to use a more recent term, blended or hybrid learning) is a form of distance education where the same course has major face-to-face elements but a large extent is taught at a distance. This mode is getting increasingly attractive for traditional universities aiming to enter the market of non-traditional distance education.

The universities included in this comparison are Argosy University in the United States, Bangor University in North Wales, Dublin City University in Ireland, University of Manitoba in Canada and University of Nebraska-Lincoln in the United States.

Argosy University is represented by 19 institutions throughout the United States, with approximately 2,541 students enrolled. No information was found on the number of distance education students currently enrolled at Argosy. The university does not promote one method of learning over another; however, it does focus on degree programs that offer working adults flexibility in their course offerings by providing online courses that include the blended delivery format. These courses are convenient and flexible in

order to accommodate the distance education student. Through marketing techniques, this university advertises key terms to attract working adults, for example “flexible/online”, “convenience”, “support”, and “largest graduate community” when describing their program. “Argosy University meets our students’ needs by giving them the choice of campus or blended learning. Whatever your choice, you are offered the same quality coursework and outcomes.” (Argosy University, 2008, para. 2) The goal of the institution is to provide and demonstrate a commitment to meeting the needs of working adult by offering fully accredited online courses that offer non-traditional methods of learning.

Bangor University, located in Snowdonia National Park in North Wales enrolls approximately 10,000 students and focuses on the student experience, specifically Bangor Business School and the School of the Environment and Natural Resources. “Courses which you can study at a distance or are 'blended' (where you can combine distance or e-learning with conventional face-to-face study) are offered by some of our schools.” (Bangor University, 2008, para. 1) Support to distance education students is provided by the computer support services department and their global support intranet site. Like Argosy University, Bangor University does not promote one method of learning over another. Its focus is the flexibility of its course offerings such as part-time course offerings; distance/blended course offerings and general undergraduate degree by part-time attendance. The university is unique because correspondence courses are offered at the intermediate and advanced level, which is yet another tool to promote its flexibility of learning methods in the distance education program.

Dublin City University's enrollment stands at 10,000 with 1,100 distance education students. Even though the number of distance education students is smaller, the university still recognizes the importance of education in terms of methods of learning and placing its focus on what they call the "mature" student. The university supports distance education students through its programs such as Student Support and Development and the Mature Student Summer School program which specifically aims at helping the student with a smooth transition to college life and assists with the use of computers/technology learning, study skills, and writing of academic papers. (Dublin City University, 2008, para. 4) The university offers degree programs ranging from undergraduate to postgraduate.

The University of Manitoba is located in Canada and typically has an enrollment rate of approximately 27,000 students, with about 24,000 undergraduate students, 3,000 graduate students and over 4,000 students who complete distance and online courses. (University of Manitoba, 2008, para. 2) Support is provided to students through the Information Service & Technology department, using online chats and extended education blogs. The university does not promote one method of learning over another. Distance education/online mixed mode courses fall under the area of Flexible Study which allows studying independently but requires the student to participate in scheduled on campus tutorials to focus on content areas where students often have questions or problems. (University of Manitoba, 2008, page 32)

University of Nebraska-Lincoln has an enrollment rate of 23,573. As all of the previously discussed mixed mode universities, it does not promote one method of

learning over another. However, this university has very clear goals in regards to the distance education learner and it is those goals that put this university in the classification mixed mode through its course offerings. Three of those goals which directly relate to the progress distance education program at this university are as follows: 1) to enhance student support services for distance learners, 2) to deliver local and distance noncredit programs that meet the business and lifelong learning needs of Nebraska citizens; and 3) to address policies that serve as barriers for the delivery and support of distance education. (University of Nebraska-Lincoln, 2008, para. 3) The University of Nebraska-Lincoln promotes distance education courses by explaining the flexibility of studying at a distance.

The five universities discussed are examples of institutions that fall under the distance education classification of mixed mode. More and more colleges and universities are revamping their programs to the needs of the distance education student by making programs and courses offered more supportive of the student. “The University of the Future will be a mixed mode university and distance education will be a prominent if not the basic element in it.” (Peters, 2004, p.45) These universities are excellent examples of this change in the educational environment and how colleges are moving forward with technology.

#### Consortia Institutions

Consortium institutions are those that are networked with other colleges and universities to provide students with options to take courses at any of the institutions in

the network at no additional charge. Consortium institutions are increasingly becoming popular as college and universities prefer to join forces to potentially service more students.

The following is an analysis of five institutions that fall into the consortia mode that offer distance learning to students: University of Nairobi in Africa, US Army in the United States, the International Telematic University in Italy, the University of Alaska in the United States, and Wakefield College in the United Kingdom.

The University of Nairobi makes use of delivery modes by utilizing methods in open, distance learning, and face to face, including the use of computer technologies, video, and audio. (University of Nairobi, 2008a, para. 3) Support provided at the University of Nairobi for students are in library services, computing and Internet services, university health services (since there are so many HIV cases in the area), sports and games, student welfare authority, placement, special student advisory, and student organization. (University of Nairobi, 2008b) Enrollment in their three degree programs have stagnated to approximately one thousand students, which may be due to the high level of HIV in the area. Currently, the mode of study is flexible, a student can study full time, part time or even in distance learning. However, the university will soon stop offering their face to face degree programs as they will be concentrating on offering courses related to computer-based research, and will help other African Universities with their own distance-education projects. (University of Nairobi, 2008d, para. 6) The goals of the university are to target groups such as professionals and employed or self-employed persons who would like to further their education for career development or self-fulfillment. (University of Nairobi, 2008e) Online certificates, diplomas,

undergraduate and postgraduate courses, adult and community education with the use of open and distance learning are offered at the institution.

The US Army has created one of the most innovative distance education programs of higher education in the world – Army University Access Online, which is known as eArmyU. It is a state-of-the-art portal which provides access online. (GoArmyEd, 2008a, para. 1) The delivery mode is through the Army University’s Access Online. Students can access course information by utilizing the institutions online site, e-mail, message boards, online chats, discussion forums, the telephone, and wireless technology that has made the Army University Access Online mobile. (GoArmyEd, 2008b) Support is provided by an e-learning system and students are also supported by resources in healthcare, military life and discounts, education and career information, popular resources, financial concerns, legal, and information for active duty, retired, and veterans. (GoArmyEd, 2008b) Twenty-nine colleges and universities are currently part of the eArmyU learning network and there are approximately 250,000 students that study solely online. (GoArmyEd, 2008c, para. 3) EArmyU goals are to transform the military so they can be capable of responding to the complex demands of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and to maximize the availability of training/technology for the IT workforce. (GoArmyEd, 2008a, para. 1) The online degrees available at eArmyU are undergraduate and graduate certificates, associate, bachelor, and master’s degrees, as well as MBA and doctorate programs.

The International Telematic University UNINETTUNO is located in Italy. The institution promotes virtual spaces that consist of satellite and Internet-based virtual classes, e-learning platform, and Web-based portal. They also promote long distance

instructive activities such as academic video lessons, video library sections, satellite broadcasting channels, virtual laboratories, television and Web interface, video classroom and conferences, and Internet and audio chats. The institution provides support to their multimedia and hyper-textural learning processes, as well as in services such as education, information, tutoring, a library, orientation, administrative and research. (International Telematic University UNINETTUNO, 2008, para. 5-10) The Nettuno consortium has four universities that enroll approximately 5,457 students into satellite classes, as well as conventional universities with approximately 9,573 students. The goal is to provide education to all citizens in the world through having access to knowledge without any space, time, or geographic limits.

The University of Alaska, located in the United States, provides face to face and independent studies. Students can access and complete their programs through distance delivery online or in a blended format consisting of either print or Web. The university also has ROTC undergraduate campus classes, campus summer programs, as well as a focus on traditional classroom/laboratory education with field work. (University of Alaska, 2008a, para. 1) The university offers support such as the center for distance education, native and rural services, academic advising, free Tele-courses online, consortium library, technology resources, on-line services, and workforce programs for developmental preparatory classes, continuing education, career and technical training. Their goal is to provide the best possible protection of university resources, including the safety of their students; to achieve its education, research, and services with minimal disruption from adverse events. (University of Alaska, 2008b, para. 1) The university

offers certificates, occupational endorsements, associates, bachelors, and master's degrees.

Wakefield College is located in the United Kingdom (UK) and currently has 10,000 part-time students and 3,000 full-time students enrolled in courses and programs. (Wakefield College, 2008a, para. 1) The college is the founder of a consortium that includes six colleges (Leeds Metropolitan University, Sheffield University, Huddersfield, Sunderland, Bradford and Roehampton University, London) that are "all committed to offering similar high standards of support for students from PR China, including Hong Kong, in order that they can be successful in achieving entry to good UK universities." (Wakefield College, 2008b, para. 2) The college's goal is to provide students with a good pre-university education so students can continue on to a degree offering university in the UK. The college offers National and Higher Education Diplomas and Foundation Degrees, a BSC Computer Applications Degree which involved a two year HND followed by one year "top up" courses from Sunderland University, and a Distance Learning Foundation Degree Leisure and Entertainment. (Wakefield College, 2008c, para. 1, 9 and 10) The college offers students over 400 courses with approximately 20 through distance learning. Support is offered to students by a personal tutor, learning centers, a student union, and the student Intranet.

The institutions assessed are all proven to be in a network or consortium with other colleges and institutions to provide students with alternative ways to study. All of the colleges offer distance learning either as courses or programs and also offer support for those students either studying on campus or at a distance and have similar goals to provide students with education at any location and at any time.



### Analysis

Distance education coupled with technology is meeting the needs of people who are very busy and have many responsibilities. Colleges and universities are now reaching out and providing more flexible and creative ways to include education in our daily lives. Our paper takes a close look at different universities all over the world with one thing in common – the student. These institutions have been classified into modes which describe how they promote their particular educational programs. They are all focused on the needs of the student through technical support, flexible courses and flexible scheduling. No matter the size of the institution or where it is located throughout the world, distance education has become the next level of education.

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