

*For those committed to
people and places...*
**Community Development On-line
Master's Program**



Susan Fey

Program Coordinator

North Central Regional Center for
Rural Development



www.ncrcrd.iastate.edu



What is the Great Plains Interactive Distance Education Alliance (IDEA)?

- A consortium of member universities that offers interinstitutional degree programs.

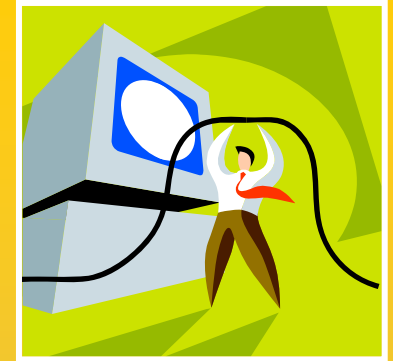
Alliance Universities:

Colorado State University	North Dakota State University
Iowa State University	Oklahoma State University
Kansas State University	South Dakota State University
Michigan State University	Texas Tech University
Montana State University	(Potentially University of Missouri)

www.gpidea.org



How did we pull it together?



- Partnership established with NCRCRD, Great Plains IDEA and interested university faculty.
- Developed the idea and coursework together.
- NCRCRD achieved a USDA Higher Education grant in 2004.
- Through several conference calls and face-to-face meetings, the faculty teams established their courses.
- Received approval through universities (some still working on this, as it is a different process everywhere).

How did we pull it together? (cont.)

- Developed the course schedule together and voted on it.
- Decided to only offer 3 tracks at the beginning.
- Developed a marketing team and strategy.
- Marketed the program.
- Began offering two courses per semester in Fall 2005.

What makes it work well?

- Excellent faculty who are excited and work well together.
- Great Plains IDEA already established.
- NCRCRD provides management and makes sure the program is running smoothly.
- Universities and departments that care about distance education .
- Universities and departments that care about minority and non-traditional students gaining advanced degrees.
- Communication and Collaboration!

Courses



- 5 required core courses
 - Community Development I: Principles and Strategies of Community Change
 - Community Development II: Organizing for Community Change
 - Community Analysis
 - Community Natural Resource Management
 - Community and Regional Economic Analysis
 - Capstone: Thesis/Creative Component
- 3 specialization tracks:
 - Working with Native Communities
 - Building Economic Capacity
 - Natural Resource Management
 - (More tracks to come: Non-profit management, Leadership, State and Local Government)
- 36 hour degree program

Collaborating Universities

- Iowa State University
- Kansas State University
- North Dakota State University
- South Dakota State University
- University of Missouri (member approval pending)
- University of Nebraska

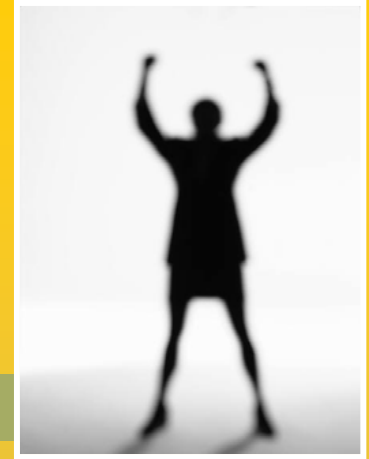


Types of Students



- Extension workers
- Native community developers
- Military
- Students who need courses for their Program of Study
- Formally enrolled students in the degree program
- Students interested in taking a few courses

Successes



- Great interest from Native students.
- Great interest from community developers.
- Students enrolled through each university every semester.
- Classes full enough to run.
- Positive feedback from students about instructors and course content.

[The instructor] was amazing. She was always there when I needed her. She really understood what the distance students were going through and adapted the course as necessary.

Challenges



- Gaining program approval from all of the universities.
- Student retention.
- Student recruitment—lack of funds for marketing.
- Communication with students who are struggling.

Student Interviews



- Student interviews (via phone and email) were conducted with past and present students to learn how the program was going.
- Questions addressed time management, financial issues, support from family, work, and community for education, and student recommendations.

What we found...



- Type of student matters
- Distance students have lives
- Time management is an issue
- Support is vital
- Regular communication is important
- Access to technology resources can be difficult
- Financial resources is an issue
- Expectations differ
- DISTANCE education can be difficult

Our response to student feedback

- Communication: Monthly newsletter for students and faculty, email.
- Meeting expectations: Orientation course development, tutorials, posting syllabi early.
- Time management: offering strategies through newsletter

Our response to student feedback (Cont.)

- Financial resources: offering information on scholarships, financial aid; offering student assistantships at ISU.
- Increased faculty communication: teleconferences, annual meeting in June.
- Increased faculty advising.



Lessons learned (for now)

- Be flexible!
- Communicate early and often!
- If you are not sure, ask.
- Create a marketing strategy that you can fund.
- The distance faculty has to feel like a real faculty.
- Students need to know what it means to be a graduate student in this on-line program.
- Students need to feel connected to the university.

Questions?

Susan Fey

North Central Regional Center for Rural Development (NCRCRD)

Iowa State University

107 Curtiss Hall

Ames, Iowa 50011

515-294-6250

susanfey@iastate.edu



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