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**Key Administrative Conditions
for the Successful Establishment of an
International Distance Learning Partnership**

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**Key Administrative Conditions
for the Successful Establishment of an
International Distance Learning Partnership**

by

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Treatise

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Dedication

I first dedicate this work to my wife, Jean, and my children, Michael and Jenna. To them, I offer my thanks and heart-felt appreciation. We all have success and achievement within us. Please let this be lasting evidence to what can be done if you set your mind to it.

Next, to my parents, Milton M. Levey (deceased) and Rhoda Levey. It took many, many years, but you finally have a “doctor in the family.”

Finally, to all others who assisted and supported me in the development of this study, it would not have been completed without your support and continued confidence.

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To my brother, Michael, who can always make me laugh.

And finally, to my best friend, Richard Valentine. That’s all that needs to be said.

Key Administrative Conditions
for the Successful Establishment of an
International Distance Learning Partnership

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America's economy and workforce continue to become increasingly high-tech, knowledge-based, and globalized. As this occurs, community colleges continue to seek ways to educate their growing diverse student populations through international programs. One way is through distance education. But simply offering an international online program does not ensure success. Administrative support, justifications, rationales, and design issues combined with quality instructional development, course delivery, and special pedagogical considerations are musts.

Many administrative issues have not been fully identified in the literature, particularly in regard to community colleges. Therefore, the need for distinguishing these essential conditions is especially important. As increasing numbers of distance learning

courses and online degree programs are offered by community colleges, one of the more significant and growing opportunities for expansion is the international market. Spawned by the widespread growth and increasing capabilities of the Internet, workforce globalization, increasing diversity, shrinking budgets, and the need for increased revenue, online programs have the capability of producing rich and varied opportunities for colleges and students on both sides of international borders. But international boundaries are not easily leaped through technology. Community college administrators should only pursue international online partnerships when they have a clear understanding and definition of the appropriate environment, student and institutional needs, capabilities required, or goals for such a program - not before.

The study asks the question, “What are the key administrative considerations and/or conditions that need to be in place for a community college to establish an international distance learning program in a partnership with a foreign higher education institution?” To clarify, the study confines itself to administrative aspects as they pertain to the creation of such a program, not ongoing operation and/or maintenance.

Practical action research is used as the methodology for the study. This methodology asserts that educational investigators can be personally involved in the research of their areas of specialization. Being the administrator at Houston Community College responsible for working with TecMilenio (a division of Monterrey Tec, Monterrey, Mexico) to establish a distance learning partnership, the author occupies an appropriate position to conduct this study.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

“Throughout the history of human communication, advances in technology have powered paradigmatic shifts in education” (Frick, 1991, as cited in Nasseh, 1997). More pragmatically put, as technology improves and becomes more widely distributed, educators plan, implement and evaluate improved ways to use it. Educational administrators, together with faculty, other specialized staff, and students, play the essential roles in that process.

This treatise is based on the belief that distance learning can be used as an effective means of internationally distributing community college courses and degree/certificate programs. More specifically, it is centered on identifying the most significant conditions that administrators must recognize and implement to support the creation of such a program. The study will rely on a number of data sources including a review of related literature, documented information from experienced peers and colleagues, distributed materials and records, and questionnaire responses from administrators and faculty involved in the project. Each of these administrators and faculty members is involved in the development and establishment of an international distance learning partnership between Houston Community College (HCC) and Universidad TecMilenio (TecMilenio), a separate college created under the auspices of the Instituto Tecnológico y de Estudios Superiores de Monterrey (ITESM), referred to in this study as Monterrey Tec. Practical action research will be used to investigate the research question and, as an accepted research methodology, to validate related activities.

Need for the Study

The study emphasizes examining the *administrative* aspects supporting the creation and successful delivery of international distance learning programs. For the purposes of this examination, administrative issues are those involved in management and/or oversight – not curriculum issues or the actual delivery of instruction per se. Although administrative concerns and objectives can significantly affect the overall curricular quality of these programs, the focus is not on the actual teaching of courses. Curriculum is addressed only from the standpoint of choosing which academic programs and/or courses would be most attractive to students from a partnering college.

The majority of the literature in the field of international distance learning puts emphasis not on what administrators must consider to offer a successful program, but what issues permeate and critically affect the development of an international *curriculum* delivered online. This emphasis on course creation and pedagogy is also true for domestic online programs (Santovec, 2006). Course and faculty development, content, course interaction, and other important considerations all impact that curricular aspect. Again, this is not the emphasis of this study. The examination of key issues *administrators* need to consider for success appears to be a question or issue far less posed in the literature.

Also, most of the literature regarding administrative aspects of international online delivery appears not to emphasize the community college environment or setting. Rather, most addresses this issue from either the four-year undergraduate program or graduate-level perspectives. Although many of the administrative issues or components

of successful international online delivery may be similar for the higher education settings mentioned above, it is anticipated that a study focusing on the community college should serve to distinguish those issues for future use and reference by others.

Finally, the Sloan Foundation, an internationally-recognized consortium devoted to the delivery of quality online education, has developed and published a framework for “guiding quality and sharing effective practices, and suggests directions for research and development” (Moore, 2005, p. 1). Known as the five pillars of quality in online education, they emphasize key areas of success in all areas of education, but emphasize distance learning and the use of asynchronous learning networks. Administrative support issues are clearly identified as a critical component of the five pillars.

Origination of the Project

The concept for this topic originated from an economic development project initiated by HCC where a partnership was proposed with Monterrey Tec. Both institutions shared a common vision for economic expansion in the respective communities and regions they serve. Also, both colleges have an important impact and contribute to the international economic, social, and cultural connections between within their communities. However, the ultimate goal of this economic development project is the collaboration and combination of the most appropriate resources and programs of both institutions to prepare individuals for employment and be productive in this international environment.

HCC's strategic plan for 2003-2006 focuses directly on student success. An essential component of that success is connecting with as many people as possible in the diverse communities served by the college. Entitled, *Opening Doors-Closing Gaps* (Houston Community College System, 2003a), the plan calls for the college to establish and maintain an essential connection to both local and global communities to achieve awareness and increased involvement. It also specifically requires the college to, "Collaborate with other entities to develop a comprehensive program for economic development" (Houston Community College System, 2003b, Focus on Student Learning section).

In keeping with this strategic charge, the economic development proposal between HCC and Monterrey Tec was originally comprised of eight individual projects. They included:

- An online continuing education project for local business development.
- Continuing education courses featuring Monterrey Tec faculty teaching at HCC.
- A student and faculty exchange program.
- A language course exchange program.
- An advanced international business certificate.
- A student internship project.
- A business incubator program.
- A distance education (academic and workforce) course exchange program. The specific program identified for initial development was International Business, a

degree track offered by both institutions. The development of this distance education program is what is being examined in this study.

What is somewhat unique about the distance education component of the larger economic development project is that it is truly a partnership. Most international distance learning programs basically offer courses and programs from one institution to students in foreign countries. Students worldwide can enter these programs and begin courses that originate from one school. However, within the context of an international business curriculum, it is planned that this partnership will make courses and programs available from both institutions to students attending either TecMilenio or Houston Community College.

When entering into this economic development project, representatives from both institutions took the common bilingual and bicultural backgrounds of their students and their communities into account. By offering students from those locations increased access to higher education and international business opportunities, both institutions believe they will strengthen not only future opportunities for their students but also each community's leadership position in the global environment.

Precedent existed for this project in that the cities of Houston and Monterrey have identified and pursued potential economic ties and opportunities prior to the partnership proposal previously described. In 2000, the City of Houston's principal business advocacy organization, the Greater Houston Partnership, recognized and developed plans through a business development mission to Monterrey which included not only creating or strengthening business ties but initiating higher education collaborations between the

University of Houston and Monterrey Tec. It resulted in a four-million dollar joint program aimed at benefiting Latino and Mexican students in both communities (Greater Houston Partnership, 2000).

HCC, Houston, and Latinos – A Background

HCC's mission statement endorses the significance of a global education and the importance technology plays in it. "Houston Community College System is an open-admission, public institution of higher education offering opportunities for academic advancement, workforce training, career development and lifelong learning that prepare individuals in our diverse communities for life and work in a *global and technological society* [italics added for emphasis]" (Houston Community College, 2004, Mission section). Since being founded in 1971, more than 1.3 million students have bettered their lives as a result of education and training acquired at the college. Through its international partnerships and programs, HCC is able to fulfill a key component of its mission to meet the educational and training needs of the larger community.

As its in-district service area, HCC serves the city of Houston, and several surrounding communities. Houston is truly a growing multinational city and its largest ethnic representation is now Latino. According to U.S. Census (2000) figures, being the fourth largest city in the U.S. with a population of 1,953,631, Houston's Latino residents numbered 730,865, the largest representation of any ethnicity. Also the Latino population is the fastest growing ethnic group in Houston, growing from 27.6% in 1990

to 37.4% in 2000 (Klineberg, 2004). This population growth and Houston's close proximity to Mexico only begin to make HCC a practical partner in this program.

“Since 1993/1994, international student enrollment at U.S. community colleges has increased 57.9%, the largest increase of all the institutional types and higher than the 30.4% increase overall in the same time period” (Koh, 2004, International Students and Community Colleges section). Further, HCC has historically been a community college leader for the enrollment of international students. In fact, HCC has 3,702 international students enrolled – the highest enrollment of any community college in the country (Open Doors, 2005). The college also offers an international, SACS-approved program through a technical college in Vietnam and has student/faculty exchange arrangements with institutions in Germany, India, and, closer to the focus of this study, other sites in Mexico.

HCC's percentage of Latino enrollment has also seen increases, growing from 24.9% in 2001/02 (Houston Community College System, 2001-2002) to 27.0% in 2004/05 (Houston Community College System, 2004-2005). However, the college's Latino enrollment growth is not commensurate with either the percentage of Latinos living in Houston or their rate of population increase. This economic development project was established to increase Latino participation and enrollment as well as better serve this population. Further, it increases global awareness, intercultural opportunities, the appropriate and effective use of technology, and ties between the two communities.

Universidad TecMilenio – A Background

In 1943, Don Eugenio Garza Sada, a 1917 graduate of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (Wikipedia, 2005), headed a group of entrepreneurs seeking to educate technical and business professionals and founded Tecnológico de Monterrey, or Monterrey Tec. The largest multi-campus university system in Mexico, “Tec” has 33 campuses in 28 Mexican cities. The university is both nationally and internationally recognized for its academic excellence, being one of the finest higher education institutions not only in Mexico, but in all of Latin America (gelato.org, 2005).

Monterrey Tec is a private, non-profit institution and places a high priority on internationalization. It has agreements with over 300 national and international institutions of higher education and emphasizes the importance of providing an education that contains a global perspective by reaching out and enrolling students from around the world. The university maintains offices in the U.S., Canada, Europe, and Latin America, has extensive international exchange programs, regularly invites foreign professors to work as visiting faculty, and promotes English proficiency skills for students, staff, and faculty (Tecnológico de Monterrey, n.d.).

One of the divisions of Monterrey Tec is La Universidad Virtual or Virtual University. It provides online and other distance learning courses to Monterrey Tec and TecMilenio students worldwide in the areas of undergraduate and graduate education as well as continuing education and social development programs (Tecnológico de Monterrey, 2006). Founded in 1989, the Virtual University offers quality education using innovative educational models, course development strategies, collaborative

learning, and advanced information technology. Currently enrolling over 102,000 students with 12 degree programs, it is one of the largest virtual, or open, universities in the world (Martinez, 2005).

Much like American community colleges, TecMilenio was organized by Monterrey Tec to provide a less-expensive, more streamlined, and work-oriented college to deliver instruction to a broader audience of Mexican students. It is an institution positioned to offer a more flexible means of creating, packaging, and delivering higher education to a broader audience at lower costs. In many ways it resembles the mission and purpose of the community college and, more specifically, that of HCC.

TecMilenio programs center around what community colleges in the U.S. describe as workforce programs. The vast majority of TecMilenio students are also employed and, more often than not, these positions are related to the service, industry, or type of business that they are studying. In fact, in many cases, scholarships are offered by TecMilenio to students because they are specifically employed in the workforce areas they are also studying.

TecMilenio's ultimate intent, however, is to provide a baccalaureate degree of corresponding quality to its parent institution. Even though it has many campuses throughout the country, its administration and curriculum are highly centralized and coordinated in Monterrey. At TecMilenio, as opposed to Monterrey Tec, extracurricular programs and services are minimized to lower overhead costs so that student tuition and other costs can be kept as moderate as possible.

In a personal conversation on December 8th, 2005, Dr. Carlos Cruz Limón, President of the Innovation and Institutional Development Division, Monterrey Tec, indicated that TecMilenio had not yet desired to seek Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) accreditation so that they can continue to experiment without many of the restrictions that SACS imposes. However, as a parent institution, Monterrey Tec possesses full SACS accreditation.

TecMilenio has a fast-growing distance learning component. The institution currently enrolls nearly 3,000 online students and offers 15 online degree programs in four primary areas – information technology, business, industrial engineering, and humanities. TecMilenio works together with the course development services provided by La Universidad Virtual to produce its online offerings. Because of its many similarities with the community college structure and purpose, the online international distance learning partnership component of the entire economic development project was proposed specifically with TecMilenio and not with its parent institution. TecMilenio has also clearly indicated its intent to establish this partnership. Through this distance learning collaboration, both institutions will extend their educational missions to large and increasing populations.

Significance of the Study

As increasing numbers of distance learning courses and online degree programs are offered by community colleges, one of the more significant and growing opportunities for expansion is the international market. Spawned by the widespread

growth and increasing capabilities of the Internet, globalization of the workforce, the rising need to respond to diversity, shrinking budgets, and the lure of increased revenue opportunities, online environments have the capability of producing rich and varied opportunities for colleges and students on both sides of international borders.

This potential capability has certainly not gone unrecognized. Total expenditures for online instruction at all colleges and universities are anticipated to exceed \$6.8-billion in 2005. They may rise to \$10.4-billion by 2007 (Eduventures, as cited in Blumenstyk, 2005).

With distance learning, boundaries can be more easily crossed, for geography is of lesser importance as the Internet, videoconferencing, and other technologies supplement or sometimes replace the traditional classroom (McIsaac, 2002). “From an educational perspective, online learning communities can easily become global classrooms comprised of students who live in different nations, but who come together in the same online learning community” (St. Amant, 2005, Introduction).

Long before electronically-driven distance education gained popularity, internationalization has been an interest for community colleges. That interest and involvement has varied widely – from student and faculty exchange programs to consortia to partnerships (Adams, 1979). Partnerships between colleges of different nations provide a variety of benefits – the most prominent and general of which are offering students, faculty, and administration unique and varied opportunities for learning, cultural exchange, and economic development (Perraton, 2000). While typically not a core mission of a community college, “involvement with international

programs offers American community colleges opportunities for exchange of ideas, experiences, and resources” (Kintzer, 1998, n.p.). This is an identified priority for HCC, part of its mission, and may now be achieved through the use of online course and program delivery as well as through more traditional means.

St. Amant (2005) stated that, “online media permit a degree of international interaction that was once unthinkable” (p. 12). With a simple login or click of the mouse, web-based learning is now made readily available to all. Volumes of information are easily accessible. Students and faculty alike can communicate worldwide using a variety of increasingly reliable technologies. Cultural boundaries are bridged and all benefit from this new global virtual connectivity.

But wait! Is the scenario for international connectivity really that rosy? Is an international distance learning program at a community college, in reality, *that* accessible or unregulated? Can we simply leap physical and cultural borders between institutions with a single “virtual” bound? Can technology truly bridge all those gaps? Hardly! Together with the substantial benefits and rewards of international involvement, there are an abundance of considerations, conditions, and cautions that must be taken into account before this virtual success can be realized.

Hatton (1995) helped set the stage for the approach community colleges need to take with international initiatives:

Whereas in the past, many community colleges participated in international activities on an ad hoc basis, when the spirit moved them and with minimal planning and resources, success in the future, insofar as

international activities are concerned, will belong to community colleges that take a professional, highly focused, strategic approach” (p. 453).

Although not specifically referring to *international* distance learning, Roueche and Roueche (2002) justifiably warned that community college administrators and faculty should be wary of “being caught up in the seductive offerings of anytime-anywhere learning” (p. S3). For a variety of reasons, they realistically point out that distance education is not for everyone. Many community college students simply may not have the academic proficiency or independent learning skills to succeed without extensive administrative, technical, and personal support or collaboration. Roueche and Roueche’s cautions understandably extend to international online programs as well. Further, administrators should only pursue international online partnerships when they have a clear understanding and definition of the appropriate environment, student and institutional needs, capabilities required, or goals for such a program – not before.

Statement of the Problem

America’s economy and workforce continue to globalize and evolve into one that is both knowledge-based and high-tech. Levin (2001) posited that globalization clearly impacted the evolving mission of community colleges due to the increased flow of immigration into the U.S., changing demographics in student population, and improved communications through evolving technological development. Taken together, these trends indicate that there is a potential expanding role for technology to bridge educational gaps between students and institutions from different nations.

As globalization increases, community colleges continue to seek ways to educate their growing and increasingly diverse student populations. One way is through distance education. Allen and Seaman (2004) reported that 96.2 percent of all public institutions of higher education either agree or are neutral to the concept that online learning is critical to their long-term strategies. Many open or virtual universities are, in fact, staking their future existence on expansion of interest and growing enrollments in distance learning (Aoki & Pogroszewski, 1998). Allen and Seaman (2004) also found that, within postsecondary education, community colleges have the largest number of students taking at least one online course. The proliferation of online learning at community colleges positions them to play an expanding role in the international arena.

But simply offering an international distance learning program between institutions does not ensure its success. Administrative support, justifications, rationales, and design issues combined with quality instructional design and delivery are musts. As many have accurately pointed out, if not carefully planned, distance learning essentially becomes another way for ineffective educational practices to be more widely distributed.

Due to its rapid growth, many administrators also see distance learning as a “cash cow” – a service that simply generates a continuing flow of revenue (Feenberg, 1999). As a result, community colleges, challenged as all public institutions of higher education are now for locating and cultivating additional sources of revenue, may feel that forays into the international online market will readily reap significant financial rewards. But contrary to the popular maxim, “if you build it, they will come,” online learning’s growth also means that online learners have choices, and as knowledgeable consumers, many

will not enroll or continue with programs that don't meet their expectations (Turoff, 1997). Rather, the focus of the community college that wishes to expand its international entrepreneurial approach should not do so simply to make money. It should emphasize meeting the needs of students and communities through the development of quality resources, capabilities, and opportunities (Roueché & Jones, 2005). Therefore, the need for careful administrative groundwork, planning, and justification in the creation and maintenance of international distance learning programs is especially essential.

Background and Growth of International Programs in the Community College

The role of international education within community colleges was definitively endorsed at a national level in 1978 at the 58th annual convention of the American Association of Community and Junior Colleges (AACJC). At that meeting, then U.S. Commissioner of Education Ernest Boyer strongly supported the involvement of community colleges in international education. He dismissed the fact that previous international involvement, being largely the domain of four-year institutions, was “disturbing nonsense” (Boyer, as cited in Adams, 1979, p. 2). At that same meeting, AACJC President Edmund Gleazer emphasized the importance of international education for community colleges, stating that, “community colleges, beyond any other postsecondary institutions, require an international dimension.” He added that, “community and junior colleges have a special responsibility and opportunity to help students shape as well as share their world” (Gleazer, as cited in Adams, 1979, p. 2) and that “an international and intercultural dimension to that [community college level]

experience can make a major contribution to [a student's] exercise of responsible citizenship" (p. 3). Gleazer especially emphasized the internationalizing of curricula as a key dimension for establishing these opportunities for community colleges and their students.

In California alone, Raby reported in 1998 that twenty-one community college member institutions of the California Colleges for International Education had actually established international distance learning programs. Levels of involvement varied, including wide-ranging use of the Internet, teleconferencing, and other tele- and net-based learning activities supporting interaction with international students, faculty, and college programs.

In comparison with other countries, however, the United States has been a relative newcomer in the field of international distance learning. Many open universities (those that only offer online courses and programs) have existed and thrived for years throughout the world. They include such widely recognized institutions as the Open University in Great Britain and universities in other countries such as Thailand, China, Indonesia, Korea, Canada, Mexico, and Turkey. Each enrolls hundreds of thousands of students annually (Proulx, 2000) – many of them international.

Certainly, international distance learning has grown concurrently with the proliferation of the Internet and associated web-based technologies. Today, one of the most prolific community college programs is La Universidad Virtual (see Monterrey Tec, La Universidad Virtual, and TecMilenio – A Background section). Another is the Southern Alberta Institute of Technology's (SAIT) Online and Distance Education

service. It now operates international offices supporting online learning in Shanghai, Dubai, Trinidad, Equatorial Guinea, and Kazakhstan, which alone enrolls 40,000 students. SAIT clearly attributes a substantial part of its growth to the Internet's ability to immediately deliver quality educational modules anywhere in the world and matching student needs with the programmatic strengths of the college (B. Luxton, personal interview, October 7, 2005).

Further supporting international growth are additional data involving online student access and enrollment:

- “Globally, more than 90 percent of college students access the Internet, with 50 percent accessing the Web daily.
- In 2004, an estimated 2.5 million degree-seeking students were enrolled in distributed courses and that number will increase again this year. About 33 percent of these students took all of their courses online (ViewCast Corporation, 2005, n.p.).

The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) reported the growing importance of bringing international education programs to students via technology compared to requiring students to travel to host institutions. It highlighted distance learning as a highly practical and efficient delivery system to address this issue. The OECD further noted that between 1998 and 2001, the proportion of American postsecondary institutions providing international distance learning programs grew from 44 to 56 percent (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2004). Growth was also reported by institutions offering online programs from foreign countries.

In fact, in the United Kingdom alone, foreign students represented 11 percent of all online students in 2001. Continued expansion is predicted throughout the world (Report on International Distance Education, 2005).

Together with Britain and Australia, the U.S. is one of three world leaders in the exportation of higher education. In fact, education is one of America's top five service exports (Lenn, 2002), bringing over \$11 billion into the U.S. economy in 2001 (Darrup-Boychuck, 2002). But growth would not occur without international demand. The expansion of our worldwide global economy makes educational attainment more important than ever. Nearly all countries, and primary industries within them, now recognize that they must educate and/or train increasing numbers of their workforce to remain competitive in a growing international market. The key to economic well-being and prosperity is access to quality education – in most cases, from countries with established and recognized higher education systems like the United States.

Community colleges are now increasingly recognizing that programs that emphasize international education and collaboration are part of their mission and future. As the American workforce becomes more and more international, community colleges and their students who have a better global awareness will be more successful, valuable, and provide an increased economic benefit for their community (Romano, 2002). Levin (2001) noted that, in the 1990's, along with the more traditional academic, vocational, and remedial missions, community college administrators began to embrace an increased "liberal technological philosophy of education" while "faculty and support staff adopted the norms of a global economy" (p. 171). This outlook assumed that "education is

instrumental and that technology is part of a global economy in which advanced education is best oriented to skills development and marketplace relevance” (p. 171). As a result, there was increased emphasis on diversity and multiculturalism in regard to technological outreach and programs. This is especially significant when also considering and responding to the changing demographic composition of community college student enrollment. The continued emergence of globalization and internationalization as a component of the community college mission continued to gain momentum.

In fact, community colleges in the U.S. have been increasingly participating as international contributors, attracting students from throughout the world. Blair, Phinney, & Phillippe (2001) conducted a survey for The American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) investigating participation in international programs amongst 307 responding community colleges. Among a variety of findings, they reported that:

- “[Community] colleges are increasingly recruiting international students, bringing greater diversity to campuses and their surrounding communities.
- 82 percent of the responding colleges reported having international components in their courses, compared with 40 percent in 1995” (p.1).

The Institute of International Education (as cited in Blair, Phinney, and Phillippe, 2001) also reported that “the number of international students enrolled at community colleges grew by 32 percent between 1994 and 1999” (p. 2), again emphasizing both changing demographics and the importance of promoting global awareness at the community college level. Additionally, 83 percent indicated that they had programs that

encouraged international interaction among students. In this new global economy and workplace, an international approach is increasingly critical for success.

Compared to four-year schools, community colleges offer a number of distinctive characteristics and advantages that assist them in adding international elements to their programs. In 1980, Gleazer (as cited in Milliron & de los Santos, 2004) described community colleges as the “speedboats of American higher education” (p. 11), referring to their capacity for creativity and connectivity. Milliron and de los Santos correlate that accelerated capacity to today’s integration of and concentration on technology-assisted learning. Further, as institutions that are community- or locally-based, community colleges have developed relationships with local businesses as well as community and ethnic organizations within their own service area. Community colleges exist to respond directly to these constituencies. They also have considerable flexibility and adaptability, having experience in efficiently planning and implementing new programs. Finally, more so than four-year schools, community colleges are considerably more experienced in offering technical, occupational, mid-management, and paraprofessional training, the subject matter of most international programs (Adams, 1979).

Summary

This introductory chapter has set the context for this study. In it, a need, origination, significance, scope, and statement of the problem have been outlined. Background information on both colleges and the communities they serve has also been presented. This information also provided a justified context for the mission and purpose

of the respective institutions as well as the international distance learning partnership being examined. Further, a brief overview of the background and growth of internationalization and globalization in the community college, with emphasis on the budding use of distance learning, has been presented.

More specifically addressing the purpose of this study, Chapter 2 focuses on a review of what the literature reveals regarding key administrative conditions and considerations to establish such a program. However, as will be presented in Chapter 3 and beyond, the question can be specifically answered for HCC and TecMilenio, through practical action research.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Literature reveals that researchers have identified and conveyed considerable information and guidelines on the establishment of successful distance learning programs (Magjuka, Shi, & Bonk, 2005). A variety of organizations and the eight regional accrediting commissions have done so as well (Mendenhall, 2003). What appear to be common themes in the majority of the research studies is the recurrence of choice of curriculum, course design, pedagogy, choice of a course management system, student readiness for online learning, and a variety of other factors that pertain to the actual curriculum design and delivery of online courses.

Fewer numbers of research studies concern themselves with or identify the administrative pieces of the distance learning puzzle that must be in place to assure and maintain success. From that perspective, even fewer specifically address international distance learning. And finally, even less speak to the issue from the community college perspective.

Researchers that do address administrative issues also appear to not agree on who should be responsible for these programs – administrators, faculty, or both (Levy, 2003). But this study does not concern itself with the question of online curriculum development or who should be in charge. In fact, later in this literature review, it is pointed out that an advisory or governing committee comprised of administrators, faculty, key technical support, business advisors, and other strategically significant personnel is an important

component for program development. What matters most is that the program is successful from all perspectives and that students are ensured that, as a result of this online experience, there is value added to the learning experience (Stick & Ivankova, 2004). This study, then, will examine program success from the perspective of the community college administrator.

Two perspectives of international online delivery are important to review from the administrator's viewpoint – the reasons for involving the college in such a program and the conditions necessary for its successful creation and maintenance. Reviews of both perspectives are provided in this chapter.

Why Are We Doing This?

Why should community colleges involve themselves in international distance education? With a myriad of daunting pressures and issues that appear to continually escalate; what rationales justify the development of an online program that emphasizes educating students from beyond our borders? After all, many other more highly publicized and seemingly vital problems exist for community colleges today. Among them, public financial support continues to decline forcing colleges to cultivate new sources of revenue, managing ethnic diversity is a growing issue, pressures for institutional accountability continue to mount, technology costs are rising, and competition from private, for-profit colleges continues to intensify. “In a world driven by the need to generate revenues, be cost-effective, deliver results, and watch the bottom line, it is important to stand back occasionally and raise questions about what we are

doing” (Bates, 1999, n.p.). But it is actually for many of these very reasons that online programs have grown and can justify themselves.

To Improve Access. Proulx (2000) stressed one of the most basic, significant, and realistic rationales – access. Providing entrée to a college education was one of the founding principles of most community colleges and continues to be one of their fundamental missions. This is especially true when addressing the needs of students that traditionally have not had the opportunity to attend college. In a more global perspective, international online programs help achieve this objective.

Technology also clearly impacts educational access as Internet availability continues to grow worldwide. Oblinger (2001) stated that, “As the Internet expands and as technology becomes more accessible, the use of the Internet as a delivery mechanism [for business and education] will continue to increase” (p. 11). Oblinger also pointed out that future growth of the Internet will certainly not be limited to the United States and Western Europe. Emerging nations will also see rapid proliferation. The increase of distance education programs offers developing countries additional opportunities for access and the expansion of human capital (Sewart, Keegan, & Holmberg, 1988; Potashnik & Capper, 1998). In fact, much of the “growth of [international] distance education is being fueled by an urgent need felt by the poor countries to close the education gap with the rich nations” (Bollag & Overland, 2001, p. A29). Greene (as cited in Oblinger, 2001) also pointed out that more than half of all new Internet users will come from outside the U.S. In fact, “Demand for higher education in Latin American, Asia, and even Western Europe is greater than the supply” (Becker, as cited in

Blumenstyk, 2005). Since this potential educational market is expanding so rapidly in foreign countries, community colleges should consider the opportunities represented in reaching these students.

Access through improved technology also allows skilled, qualified instructors to better distribute knowledge and learning through well-designed courses (Moran & Mugridge, 1993). For international delivery, quality courses and programs, that directly suit the specific academic or training needs of foreign students, can be used to “teach students over a broad geographical area, at times that suit the students” (Hawkrige & Morgan, 1999, p. 11).

To Be Consistent With the College’s Mission. Efforts to expand access also require critical decisions on use of resources. As a result, institutional mission is a critically important rationale for establishing an online program of any type, and an essential key for success (WICHE, as cited in Berg, 2001). McAlister, Rivera, and Hallam (2001) pointed out that instructional development resources from faculty, administration, and staff perspectives, can be valuable and are oftentimes scarce. Therefore, prior to committing to a distance learning project of this scope, it is essential that a college determine where and how development of an international online program fits into its strategic plan, mission, and financial plans and ensures that appropriate resources are committed to it (Berge & Schrum, 1998; Berg, 2001). How high is it on the list of strategic priorities, especially one that requires significant funding, long-term development and maintenance, and a multidisciplinary commitment? Further, will this

project reduce commitment or resources to any other online programs or planned priorities of the institution? If so, is it justified?

To Make Money. Perhaps one of the most obvious rationales and lures is the opportunity to increase revenues. Considering the community college tuition structure, international students are assessed a higher rate than students within the college's service district or sometimes even pay more to a college or university within their own country. For the great majority of American community colleges, in-district student tuitions are supplemented through both local taxes and state appropriations. Also, when considering the fixed costs of developing an online course that would be offered to both in-district and foreign students, the college could further maximize its return on investment in the creation of that course.

However, Bates (1999) raises ethical cautions with this viewpoint. Should wealthier countries like the U.S. get richer selling these courses and programs to students from poorer countries? Could this practice be considered exploitation? "Is education just another commodity or service to be sold abroad?" (Bates, 1999, n.p.). Also, should community colleges be educating foreign students at the potential expense of not investing existing resources to support their own?

On the other hand, these programs often provide a foreign student access to educational opportunities provided from countries with the best educational systems in the world. Why should they be prevented from accessing better opportunities to succeed, prosper, or improve their quality of life? From that perspective, one could surmise that both parties benefit. The student presumably receives a quality education and the college

benefits from a financial standpoint – assuming the program clearly fits into the mission and goals of the college.

Bleeke and Ernst (as cited in Acker, Slaa, and Bouwman, 1993) supported this position. They noted that, despite the possible risk of program failure, the need for technology-based joint educational ventures between higher education institutions opened markets, created revenue opportunities, and generated healthy competition.

Feenberg (1999) emphasized concern and caution, especially for college administrators, regarding the tempting appeal of reaping financial rewards. Feenberg warned that the critical driving force in the development of online programs may be monetary, not educational. Recognizing that maintaining fiscal stability is becoming more and more of a threat in the higher education environment, administrators may tend to take advantage of online learning's explosive growth as a means generating significant revenue. International markets can easily be identified as fertile ground for the cultivation of additional income. The drive for additional financial resources must be balanced with other priorities.

It might be concluded that the rationale of making money is reasonable if, among a host of justifications, it complements the strategic direction of the college and does not exclude or negate opportunities for in-district students. But this author will provide more discussion on what components must exist for an international online program to *succeed* in the next section of this chapter.

To Enhance Diversity. International online programs also enhance social diversity by increasing the size of the multicultural student and faculty body and

expanding participation between all involved. They simply offer opportunities for integrating a stronger international perspective into a community college. This is especially true when an international effort complements an existing ethnic representation within the college and its district. It can promote students, faculty, and administration to think more collaboratively in regard to “global political, economic, social, and cultural arenas. It is [one] way an institution adapts to an ever-changing, diverse external environment that is becoming more globally focused” (Ellingboe, as cited in Proulx, 2000, n.p.).

Obviously, it is no longer possible, nor is it healthy, for a community, a college, or a nation to remain isolated. Each is an open system, dependent on adapting to contacts and exchanges with the rest of its diverse world. Social growth and economic prosperity is greatly dependent on associations with foreign interests and economies. Often, an individual’s contact with international perspectives is introduced and fortified through enrollment in higher education – and often that enrollment is in the community college (Harrington & Clarkson, 1979).

To Meet Student Demand. Meeting demand is another key rationale for developing these programs. Bates (1999) characterized it simply as, “providing opportunities for study that would not otherwise be available in another country” (n.p.). Among a number of reasons, Bates and de los Santos (1997) justify these international programs by ascertaining that there would be sufficient worldwide student interest and identifying a partner that could both guarantee student enrollment and share in the risks of initiating a program.

It is more often individual foreign students and institutions, not the American community college, initiating the request for such programs. However, it is also often the case, despite the widespread development and maturation of open universities outside of this country, that these foreign institutions have minimal experience in developing and offering them. Partnering with an American institution can not only establish a prestigious relationship and attract students for the foreign institution or student, but often provide a faster and more cost-efficient approach to gain entry into this mode of instructional delivery (Bates, 1999).

To Be Altruistic. Community colleges may become involved in these programs simply because they are concerned for the benefit or welfare of others – particularly those in developing nations. Establishing these programs provides opportunities for learning and skill development that might otherwise not be obtainable to students or institutions. “It also helps improve the quality of education in these countries” (Bates, 1999, Altruism section). Foreign colleges and universities can offer many additional opportunities, perspectives, skills, knowledge, and benefits toward the American educational experience as well. This can only improve economic and social progress. In a larger perspective, many colleges simply feel *it’s the right thing to do*.

To Internationalize the Curriculum. Working through international partnerships, students also benefit from a more extensive range of courses, programs, and contacts. “Through distance learning technologies, we can broaden or breach cultural, social, and political boundaries” (Porter, 1997, p. 207). When courses or programs are planned for international delivery from their inception and when they involve cooperative

planning and development from both sides of a border, the students, faculty, and administration that comprise both colleges can only benefit from internationalization of that curriculum. “Most countries [now] agree that their curricula must transcend national boundaries if they are to give students adequate background to succeed in an increasingly competitive economy” (Proulx, 2000, n.p.).

There are a variety of reasons for a community college to launch an international online program. The list above is certainly not complete yet is intended to provide an overview of the myriad of rationales and motivations. What is most important, however, is that the community college be clear on why it is getting involved. In the case of HCC and TecMilenio, this was described in Chapter 1.

Community colleges are distinctive in regard to the needs, initiatives, and programs that specifically serve their unique constituencies and service districts. Being clear about a community college’s mission and purpose, and ensuring that the college follows those as guidelines, will profoundly impact the success of any such program.

What Are the Keys to Success?

Equally as important as motivations and justifications, and even more important when considering the focus of this study, are the *conditions* that must exist or be created within the community college to initiate or maintain a viable and quality international online program. There is a clear distinction between *why* a community college establishes a distance learning-based international program and *what conditions and activities* should exist within the college for the program to succeed and grow. As is true

with rationales and justifications, the potential list of conditions is also extensive. In fact, the list can be as long as the individual characteristics and number of institutions involved in these programs. As previously described, this author will limit the scope of discussion to exploring many of the *administrative* issues raised in the literature.

International distance learning partnerships open a range of doors for opportunity. But there is a considerable difference between opening a door and keeping it open. Establishing such a program is neither simple nor straightforward (Mugridge, 1996). The keys to successful programs are many and varied. They are closely tied to characteristics, direction, and areas of emphasis particular to each institution in the partnership (Moran & Mugridge, 1993). There are a myriad of social, educational, economic, and technological conditions that must be addressed when successfully delivering international distance learning programs – and they are challenging (Carty, 1999).

Mission. Institutional strategic direction, purpose, and reason for being, is emphasized as both a rationale for getting involved, as described in the previous section, and a key for success. To develop, support, and offer international online programs, a comprehensive and systematic plan must be implemented.

In 1994, a conference on international distance education was held at Pennsylvania State University where Mugridge (1996) presented a series of recommendations for success. Topping the list was to:

“Make sure that your purpose or mission statement is clearly stated and contains both short-term and long-term goals. A corollary to this lesson is the critical importance of ensuring that this statement and description of

goals are communicated to those participating in the cooperative effort”

(p. 32)

In other words, it is critically essential that the college’s reason for being is consistent with the international online program. It also asserts that an understandable mission and goals should be clearly communicated to all involved. Adams (1979) clearly emphasized that for communication and authority to be endorsed in any international education program, both the CEO and governing board of the community college must provide approval, support, and commitment.

Offerman (as cited in Moran and Mugridge, 1993) warned of a series of potential pitfalls, or areas where international collaborations in distance learning programs could fail. One involved mission clarity and articulation, or a “pervasive failure to establish clearly and articulately consortium mission and goals” (p. 9). It is important to note the term *consortium* in the above quotation, implying the critical need for the missions and goals of all partnering institutions to have a common purpose supporting the development and maintenance of these online programs. Overall success is threatened if one college or institution takes full control of the relationship, must spend considerable time and effort convincing other partners of its value, or if individual partners perceive that they are being dominated by the status, resources, or sense of ownership exercised by another (Moran & Mugridge, 1993).

Roberts, Keough, and Pacey (as cited in Burge, 2001) expressed another caution related to mission. Not only must institutional goals be clearly articulated and linked to international efforts, but they added that these goals must also go beyond simply stating a

college's wide-ranging and "naïve goal of social access and the common good" (p. 154). They must be more specific and directed.

Acker, Slaa, and Bouwman (1993) raised a related point in their examination of international academic joint ventures that use technology. They noted the importance of ensuring that it is not only the institution, or *suprasystem*, as a whole that benefits from an international relationship. *Subsystems*, such as students, faculty, libraries, and technical support departments must benefit as well. Their role in the contribution to and benefits from the project, as outlined by mission and goals, must be clearly stated and understood or collaboration may be unsuccessful. For continued program effectiveness, goals and objectives should also be evaluated and updated each year (Adams, 1979).

Martorana and Shannon (1979) called for a "systematic plan of attack" (p. 12) when community colleges develop international programs. These programs must be clearly integrated within the current strategic planning, actions, and structure of the college. More specifically, to be successful, the strategic approach within the college and between participating schools must be unified, demonstrating the particular, identified mission of inter-institutional collaboration at all levels.

Administrative Models. Missions and goals may be in agreement, yet this does not imply that administrative models for the delivery of these programs will or must agree. Carliner (2001) pointed out that for a program to be successful between partners or consortia, and most importantly for the learners, a single administrative model for the delivery of an online program must be agreed on between all associates. He recommended that model should stem from the administrative policies of one of the

participating institutions. Each institution has a different means of administratively managing their distance learning programs. Carliner contends that one must take the lead. Competing administrative models will cause confusion and potential failure. This issue is of critical importance in the partnership discussed in this study – particularly since one partnering institution is a community college and the other one that awards bachelor's degrees. To assure that an administrative model is agreed upon and this process progresses efficiently, Carliner also stressed the importance of an established and continuing relationship between key administrators involved in the effort. They must understand the program's requirements for success and be able to provide executive organizational support when required.

Advisory Committee and Administrative Collaboration. Advisory committees composed of representatives of the administration, relevant academic departments, technical support, financial representatives, and student support services should be established. Through this committee, and in any cross-national collaboration, communication must be established early and actively maintained (Swigger, Alpaslan, Brazile, & Monticino, 2004; Blight, Davis, & Olsen, 2000). The committee should advise the individual(s) responsible for the program about developing and maintaining services for students, faculty, and other stakeholders. One of this group's primary responsibilities should be to champion the program and support the faculty, administrators, and other stakeholders involved. Another is to clearly delineate the roles of administrators and faculty to minimize confusion regarding organizational responsibilities, program direction, and curriculum (Tulloch, 1996).

The committee provides leadership when policies need to be made or revised, finances adjusted, or provide overall accountability as the program moves forward (Berge & Shrum, 1998; Carter, 1996). It must also include representation from all other partner colleges and institutions to ensure remote student and administrative needs are considered and met.

Webber and Robertson (2003) strongly recommended faculty leadership on these committees at all partner institutions. Faculty who lead this effort must work efficiently and collaboratively with administrative representatives. They must have a strong enough interest in the program to see it through from initial negotiations to establishment and into eventual maintenance. Further, these faculty must already be perceived as leaders and have knowledge of the internal workings of their own colleges. In other words, they should have a considerable degree of institutional political savvy. They also must be compatible with one another on a cross-institutional basis as well as have a basic knowledge of educational cultures existing at their partner colleges. One way this can be facilitated is through regular and/or frequent visits to partnering institutions (Bates & de los Santos, 1997; Blight, Davis, & Olsen, 2000). Advisory committees and program administrators must also manage faculty workloads so they have the time and resources to support the international effort, maintain positive relationships with international peers, and find their participation rewarding (Dahl, 2005).

Culture. In regard to crossing cultures with distance learning technologies, Filipeczak (1997) stressed that, "...if you're thinking that you could just pump the same content to more receiving sites around the world, you might want to reconsider. Cultural

issues around training affect how well your Americanized program is likely to go over” (p. 40).

Gay’s (2000) work on the significance of cultural responsiveness emphasized the importance of this key to success. She stressed that being sensitive to cultural differences has a direct, positive impact on school performance. Although including but not specifically centering on Latinos, Gay pointed out that higher levels of achievement can be attained when teaching contains references and experiences that more closely align with a student’s ethnicity.

“Culturally responsive teaching . . . is based on the assumption that when academic knowledge and skills are situated within the lived experiences and frames of reference of students, they are more personally meaningful, have higher interest appeal, and are learned more easily and thoroughly”

(Gay, 2001, p. 106).

This concept is an important consideration for administrators of online education as well as those more closely aligned with traditional teaching or delivery methods.

Successfully bridging educational cultures can be a significant challenge, but students typically emphasize cross-cultural interaction as one of the greatest benefits of an international experience (Carty, 1999). However, because each institution of higher education, let alone each nation and its people, has its own distinct culture, differences often translate into varying administrative practices, academic procedures, and expectations among students (Carliner, 2001). “Cultural differences can affect how

students share ideas, comprehend concepts, and access course-related materials” (St. Amant, 2005, Abstract section).

For example, in the United States and in many other western nations, interactivity in the physical and virtual classroom is not only accepted, but promoted. Together with encouraging critical thinking skills, students are often influenced to constructively challenge and debate concepts and opinions of faculty, fellow students, and readings (Bates, 1999).

In many foreign countries, however, this is not an acceptable practice. Often the professor’s status, lectures, and opinions have traditionally been unquestionable and offering challenging or contradictory opinions are not welcomed. Perhaps related to this tradition, Bates (1999) also found that, in online courses, differences in ethnic background had an effect on a student’s willingness to participate in online forums. What may be implied from Bates’ findings is that administrators and faculty can anticipate these differences and therefore, the effect of culture on online programs and classroom management can be somewhat controlled and/or directed.

Analyzing the foreign culture(s) in advance of beginning a program is helpful. Differences in academic practices, customs, or communication can, in many cases, be anticipated and prepared for. Geert Hofstede (as cited in Chute & Shatzer, 1995) presented a model to help understand and anticipate foreign academic cultures and customs. The model included four primary factors to consider when examining the foreign culture where online training is to be delivered:

- Power distance – or how much authority a professor has in relation to the foreign, virtual students.
- Uncertainty avoidance – what is the ambiguity comfort level of the prospective students?
- Individualism – is the culture comfortable with deviating from their accepted norm in the academic environment?
- Masculinity – has this culture accepted gender equality? Would a female professor be distracting or even acceptable to some males in other cultures?

Cultural issues within one's own organization must also be considered. Berge and Muilenburg (2000) conducted research targeted at determining barriers to distance learning from the perspective of managers and administrators. To do this, they administered a survey that compared responses from administrators and managers to those of the other respondents including support staff, teaching faculty/trainers, researchers, and students. Their most surprising finding regarding barriers perceived by managers and administrators was that they were nearly the same as those indicated by all other respondents. All believed that cultural change within their own organization's perception of distance learning to be the greatest obstacle to successful online program delivery. Others key barriers fell under the umbrella of cultural change with issues such as lack of institutional vision, deficiencies in strategic planning, slow program implementation, and keeping up with the pace of technology. The study called for

managers and administrators to implement these specific changes within their organizations to help ensure success.

Overall, differences in institutional and student culture must be anticipated, especially when it involves supporting change in a virtual learning environment. At some American colleges and universities, educational culture is extremely traditional, powerful, and ingrained. Whether intentional or not, that culture may be imposed on international partner institutions. However, Evans (2003) pointed out that changing or even trying to modify the foreign institutional or departmental cultures is a difficult process. It should not be solely attempted through establishment of an international online program.

Student Services. At the heart of any online program, or for that matter, any educational program, are student services. Anytime, anywhere access to technology-enabled student services is a must, especially for online courses and programs. Beyond simply placing descriptions of these services on a web server, organization, accessibility, and comprehensiveness are mandatory. If designed well, online student services websites can truly offer an international and virtual “one-place stop” for student services, improving on the “one-stop shop” concept that many community colleges currently strive for. That is, a technology-generated and consumer-oriented model of one point of contact for all services provided.

For distance learning programs, this has historically been an uphill battle. In 2003, the Western Cooperative for Educational Telecommunications (WCET) stated, “Serving the off-campus student has not been part of the mainstream campus agenda for

most institutions due to a lack of both the resources and the flexibility to meet the unique needs of these students.” (p. 1).

What should these services be? Langer and Griggs (2003) recommended that administrators consider a comprehensive and specific list. They include prospective student information, admissions, financial aid, registration, orientation services, academic advising, technical support, library services, instructional support/tutoring services, an online bookstore, and perhaps most importantly, a sense of community (Rovai, 2002) – all offered bilingually.

However, as each community college has differing programs and priorities with an online program, student services will also have variations in emphasis. Tait (2000) asserts that there is no universal blueprint. But the community college website must address the comprehensive variety of elements that make up the student support structure of that particular college and address needs particular to foreign online students.

Language. Language considerations must also be anticipated. Although English is currently the most predominant worldwide language in regard to educational offerings, the growth of Latino student enrollment warrants the consideration of offering more courses or modules in Spanish (Bates, 1999). Providing courses only in English to a primarily Spanish-speaking country not only limits potential students to those that are bilingual, but also presents obvious communication disadvantages to those who must take an online course in a non-native tongue. However, there are cases of internationally-oriented universities, such as Monterrey Tec/TecMilenio, that emphasize and encourage the use of English and, in some cases, require a minimum level of proficiency for their

students. This is true in regard to this particular study. Therefore, language barriers, although not completely removed, are considerably reduced.

Pease (2002) stated that some foreign students choose to enroll in courses taught in English to improve their language skills. Unless the course subject is a language, communication, speech or related field, or the student already demonstrates satisfactory English proficiency, this author disagrees with Pease's assertion. An online class may not be the best environment in which to simultaneously master course content and improve language skills. However, regardless of the native language, many international students desire the American degree or certificate, and at times require the flexibility to learn in their own language. If there is a demand, the college should be committed and prepared to offer courses in other languages (Pease, 2002).

St. Amant (2005) recommended establishing a standard language and dialect that will be used throughout the program. This can encourage administrators from different linguistic backgrounds to learn more about the language of choice and establish a standard for future communication not only for them but for students.

Budget. Obviously, a community college will not be successful in any new international online venture without a clear understanding and commitment to the financial resources necessary for success. The college must indicate and demonstrate that it can provide the funding to get the job done. Among a variety of potential expenses, travel, salaries, technology costs, and fees for outsourced services must be committed.

According to their mission, goals, and priorities, community colleges must determine the appropriate institutional budget. Return on investment, both monetary and

otherwise, should also be measured and the budget should be reevaluated accordingly. Issues such as international student enrollment, retention, and overall value of learning experience must be periodically assessed (Tait & Mills, 2003). Future project budgets must reflect these assessments and outcomes.

Tuition. Another key consideration involves tuition. Tuition costs vary greatly among colleges within the U.S., as well as in foreign countries. Because of monetary or economic differences between nations, what may be affordable or a bargain here may be a true financial hardship for an international student. Partnering colleges must consider this issue (Bates, 1999). Also, many colleges have variations in either the tuition or fees charged to students who enroll in on-campus classes when compared to their online counterparts. Often, physical seats are more valuable than virtual ones because they are more limited. Therefore, higher fees are charged for them. Theoretically, seats in online courses are unlimited, providing that sufficient number of qualified instructors can be hired to teach those classes.

In the case of most community colleges, as in state-funded four-year schools, tuition varies according to residence. Foreign students are often assessed the highest tuition rates of all. With varying currency exchange rates, even a community college education can be priced well beyond an international student's range of affordability. Administrators must take this into consideration.

A Thorough Needs Assessment. When examining an administrator's role in developing distance education programs, Carter (1996) stressed the requirement of a comprehensive needs assessment. Program relevance and need should first consider the

learner, because success of such programs occurs first at the learner level. Next, institutions and partnership relevance should be determined (Burge, 2001). Although many colleges initiate or consider initiating an international distance learning program, “it should only be done after determining that a need or needs exist which can be fulfilled only through this [needs assessment] process” (Carter, 1996, p.124). As early as 1986, Daniel (as cited in Moran & Mugridge, 1993) recommended that each institution should conduct a self study as a prerequisite for entering an international distance learning consortium. The self study should include details on contributions each institution should make, benefits gained, and membership costs and responsibilities.

Online programs have the potential to enroll, and affect, large numbers of students. A well-planned needs assessment will determine the practicality and impact of a distance education program on an institution and its students. It can also help identify why the college is going in the direction it is and the areas that need to be emphasized to get there.

Quality Control. Issues regarding quality control are both obvious and diverse. One key question community colleges must ask themselves is “whether international students are receiving the same quality of program, or achieving the same standards, as students, taking a program in conventional ways?” (Bates, 1999, n.p.). This is not to imply or simply assume that the online program may be the one of lesser quality, having to rise to the standard of the on-site offering. In fact, a growing question nowadays is whether many on-site courses are as effective as their online counterparts (Fowler, 2005). Regardless, the continued establishment and development of best practice methods,

strategies, and outcomes regarding the quality of online offerings, together with ensuring its consistency with the same on-campus courses, can lead to programmatic success and improved student outcomes.

Bates (1999) also cautioned that it may not always be possible for a foreign student to receive exactly the same quality as students from the college originally offering the course or program. An example of this may be that tutoring services, student/tutor ratios, or the availability of qualified teaching assistants or course moderators may not be the same for international students.

Technology. The efficient and effective use of instructional technology is a necessity, not a luxury (Proulx, 2000). Although distance learning technologies and connectivity are becoming more and more reliable, a challenge that continues for administrators is ensuring that timely and responsive technical assistance is provided to all participants. Administrators, through their information technology and support staffs, must also anticipate technical problems and plan for them in advance (Carliner, 2001). Further, opportunities for hardware and software incompatibility also arise. Problems with email servers, online testing software, audio and video streaming, online audioconferencing, connectivity to PDA's and other handheld devices can occur. These difficulties can be exacerbated by the fact that, especially in developing countries, bandwidth speeds and connection reliability are not what they are in the U.S. or many other western nations (Carty, 1999). As a result, several of the technology tools mentioned above – Internet-based tools that we take for granted in this country – can be either compromised or made inoperative.

A study performed by Schifter (2000) revealed that one of the top inhibiting factors for distance learning students was “lack of technical support provided by the institution” (p. 19). A survey performed by Frey and Donahue (2002) indicated that over 43% of faculty said lack of adequate technical support was the primary barrier to the effective delivery of distance learning courses and services. In 1995, Sherry wrote, “technical support staff [in distance learning departments] form the vital link between teacher and student” (p. 359). She added that, “In designing effective distance instruction, one must consider not only the goals, needs, and characteristics of teachers and students, but also ... technical constraints” (p. 344).

Not only do all participants benefit from a technical support team that can install, maintain, and troubleshoot equipment and software, but also a team that can effectively communicate and consult on current and anticipated requirements. With international programs that offer courses to students who speak a native language other than English, bilingual technical support is essential.

Students must be assured that technologies are useful and easy to access if they are to consider distance education a viable means of learning. One of the most exasperating experiences for students, instructors, and administrators involves technical obstacles. If these complications are not removed and/or clients are not ably assisted through efficient and readily available help-desk services, the program risks having its students and other users becoming outspoken critics due to frustration and feelings of isolation. With the development and maintenance of timely and quality technical support, all users can feel well supported and valued (Chambers, 2004). Additionally, the

originating college must maintain service hours that are convenient to clientele, taking into account time differences throughout the world.

Politics and Economic Stability. A clear risk factor that colleges need to anticipate involves political and economic instabilities, particularly in foreign, developing countries:

“Unstable politics, volatile economies, and weak institutions have plagued developing societies throughout most of their histories. Collaborative international distance education, with its need for planning across systems and over time, is especially vulnerable to these elements” (Carty, 1999, Political and Economic Arena section).

With a very different and unusual perspective, Noel and Henson (1997) cautioned that, for various reasons, international technology-based outreach could be perceived as threatening – not to foreign countries but to our own. They feared the possibility that since the U.S. had such a great advantage in technology, sharing this with other nations could compromise our competitive edge! Perhaps a more realistic and current concern involving political stability may be in regard to internal community college politics. In-house political and other types of opposition to international programs may very well arise if and when questions and competition regarding mission, division of resources, compensation, and competition for staff time and facilities surface. Further, political or competitive problems may arise among administrators, staff, faculty, or others involved in the project

Evaluation, Assessment, and Accreditation. In this day and age, community college administrators are no strangers to the need for accountability and accreditation. In international relationships, it is important for community colleges in the U.S. to demonstrate their accreditation credentials and practices of accountability and assessment (Blight, Davis, & Olsen, 2000). Program accreditation from an official, recognized accrediting agency establishes prominence and value compared to many of the online “diploma mills” that create much of the existing skepticism regarding online curricula and degree programs. Developing foreign countries can be particularly vulnerable to guarantees of quality American degree and certificate programs, only to find out that promises made regarding quality may not be promises kept (Carty, 1999).

Carliner (2001) strongly endorsed student evaluation of instruction that provides a planned, periodic assessment of course and program quality. The evaluation instruments must be the same for all students to provide a consistent means of assessment. Evaluations should address subjects traditionally examined in student evaluations, but must also ask about issues specifically related to distance education delivery of instruction. These include criteria such as online orientations, use of media and other supporting technologies, use of online testing and quizzes, availability of the instructor for interaction, quality of Internet-based library resources, online tutoring services, and others. Information gathered from these evaluations must be used to improve not only the quality of instruction, but the overall quality of the program. Faculty must also be evaluated by their peers on a regular basis, using an accepted instrument that specifically assesses key online education components of teaching, teachers, and learning.

Summary

The reasons for getting involved in international distance learning programs and the list of conditions necessary for successful implementation are varied, diverse, and especially long. Some other conditions not specifically discussed include the administration of marketing, recruitment, admissions, registration, and academic calendars. These certainly may arise as the study evolves.

Regardless, international online programs are not enterprises that should be conceived, formed, maintained, or taken lightly. Nor should they be treated the same as programs delivered to students in the U.S. They have many unique characteristics and require strong administrative institutional teamwork and support to succeed. There are no easy routes to success.

One concept is certain, distance education offers a broader stage and increased opportunities for community colleges to serve constituencies, whether local or across borders. An international approach is becoming increasingly important and more sophisticated as reliable technological tools are being used to facilitate and develop that effort. “We are truly a global online classroom, and all indications are that the future will see more international education conducted in this manner” (McIsaac, 2002, n.p.).

In the following methodology chapter, the uses and relevance of action research, as well as the specific type of action research to be applied, are examined as a means for examining the research question.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

As briefly mentioned in Chapter 1, practical action research is the methodology used to conduct this study. Regarding the foundations of action research, its various models, implementation, and application, the following key questions are addressed in this chapter:

- What is the specific research question being asked in this study?
- What are the origins of action research and its relevance to this study?
- What warrants its use?
- What are the primary types of action research?
- What are some examples of action research models?
- Which action research model will be used and how will the study be carried out?

Research Question

This research study relies upon action research as a method for answering the following question:

What are the key administrative considerations and/or conditions that need to be in place for a community college to establish an international distance learning program in a partnership with a foreign higher education institution?

As described in Chapter 1, this study addresses administrative issues specifically concerning management and/or oversight of such a program. It does not speak to administrative issues involved in developing curriculum or the actual delivery of instruction. Administrative decisions and concerns clearly can influence development of courses and overall curricular quality. Yet this study will not be on curricular issues nor the administration of them. Much research and resulting literature exists in that area already.

As a research methodology, action research is an iterative process of learning by doing. This methodology is appropriate for a distance learning administrator studying a new, international initiative that will be overseen by one's own department in a direct, one-to-one partnership with a foreign college. The goal of this study is to internally identify administrative, non-curricular conditions that must be present for a new international distance learning program to be successful. HCC also plans to build on the anticipated success of this unique program, progressively creating a more responsive, effective, and successful online program both for internal/domestic as well as international applications.

Essentially, action research asks the question, "How do I improve what I am doing?" (McNiff, 2002, Why do action research? section). Therefore, these combined goals of developing a successful process for offering the program and for progressively improving that process, all from the perspective of the administrator primarily responsible for its development, lead to action research being the methodology of choice.

Origins of Action Research

The creation of the term and the origins of action research are somewhat unclear, but most often credited to social psychologist Kurt Lewin (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988; Adelman, 1993; Mills, 2003) while at Cornell University, The University of Iowa, and eventually, MIT. Born in Prussia, in an area that is today Poland, Lewin first moved to Germany and eventually settled in the United States (Smith, 2005). While in Germany he personally witnessed the widespread rise of bigotry and prejudice so prevalent in pre-war Nazi society. This motivated him to explore and improve social conditions through finding “ways that social science could help strengthen democracy and reduce prejudice” (Schmuck, 1997, p. 140). Through group discussions and other discourse involving the specific steps of planning, acting, observing, and reflecting, Lewin convincingly proposed that many unfavorable social conditions existing in his time could be improved (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2006). His views are supported in the following quotation:

“The research needed for social practice can best be characterized as research for social management or social engineering. It is a type of *action-research* [italics added for emphasis], a comparative research on the conditions and effects of various forms of social action, and research leading to social action. Research that produces nothing but books will not suffice” (Lewin, 1948, p. 202-3).

To achieve his goal of improving specific social conditions and practices, Lewin asserted that social scientists must be personally involved in the research of their areas of specialization (Masters, 1995). As a result, he created a theory of action research that

was based on “proceeding in a spiral of steps, each of which is composed of planning, action, and the evaluation of the result of action” (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988, p. 8). Lewin’s original form of action research included six stages: “(1) analysis, (2) fact-finding, (3) conceptualization, (4) planning, (5) implementation of action, and (6) evaluation” (Baskerville & Wood-Harper, 1996, p. 237). According to McKernan (1991, as cited in Masters, 1995), Lewin’s theory and process made action research a method of acceptable inquiry and provides an entrée to the following section addressing the appropriateness of action research for this study.

Appropriateness of Action Research as Methodology for This Study

As the primary Houston Community College administrator involved in the development of this international distance education project between HCC and TecMilenio, this author was presented with the opportunity to confer on and study the best ways to put this program into efficient functionality and operation. This program was not a theoretical exercise or discussion, but rather an opportunity to implement a model of international distance education delivery between the two institutions. Perhaps even more importantly, this author had the informative and valuable experience to lead the development process that identified key areas of emphasis and focus, collect data on those areas, evaluate those data and experiences, and then further develop a plan of action based on that information. This cyclical and collaborative process of identification, data collection, analysis, and acting on analysis (while the researcher is an active participant in the study) is the basic progression underlying action research.

To support the suitability of this methodology to this study, Gay and Airasian's (2000) description was appropriate:

“Action research is a type of practitioner research that is used to improve the practitioner's practice; action implies doing or changing something . . . the purpose of action research is to find problems and to correct them . . . the “fix things up” aspect of action research is carried out by the . . . researcher” (p. 593-595).

Creswell, (2002) further supported its applicability by describing the overall purpose of action research as:

“gaining insight, developing reflective practice, effecting positive changes in the school environment (and on educational practices in general). . . The purpose of action research is to provide teacher [and administrator] researchers with a method for solving everyday problems in schools” (p. 499).

Mills (2000) described action research as a systematic form of inquiry completed by teachers (or in the case of this study, an administrator) to gather information in an effort to improve the operation of a particular educational activity or setting. The North Central Regional Educational Laboratory (2004) complemented Mills' description by defining action research as:

“inquiry or research in the context of focused efforts to improve the quality of an [educational] organization and its performance. It typically

is designed and conducted by practitioners who analyze the data to improve their own practice” (n.p.).

As opposed to traditional basic research, which focuses on asking and answering questions for the purpose of the attainment of knowledge, action research centers on creating change and improvement in an actual workplace situation (Deshler & Ewert, 1995). “Action research focuses on research *in* action, rather than research *about* action” (Coghlan & Brannick, 2005). More specifically, Schmuck (1997) differentiates traditional from action research with the following distinctions:

- While traditional research centers on explaining functions, influences, and relationships, action research focuses on practical aspects of improving a situation or process.
- While traditional research seeks to accumulate knowledge, action research seeks to create practical advancement and self-revitalization of one’s own organization and its more efficient function. Action researchers are attempting to build practical theories within their own profession.
- While traditional researchers try to move outside their subjective perspective of a given area, action researchers purposefully seek information from both themselves and others within their own practice.

It is also a reflective and cyclic process. “As its name implies, action research is intended to achieve both action and research. It is suited to situations where you wish to bring about action in the form of change, and at the same time develop an understanding which informs the change and is an addition to what is known” (Dick & Swepson, 1997,

n.p.). It appears well suited for devising an administrative model for the effective delivery of an international distance education program.

Finally, of key importance is that action research acknowledges and supports the significance and value of involving practitioners as principal investigators and/or essential contributors to the research itself. Using this methodology, the researcher can not only study him/herself, but may also work as part of a team to essentially learn and/or create a new educational process or positively influence one that requires either improvement or refinement (Ryder & Wilson, 1997).

Primary Types of Action Research: Participatory and Practical

A variety of action research categories and models are described in the literature. There are many types or labels including technical/scientific (McKernan, 1992; Grundy, 1992), contextural, radical, educational (O'Brien, 1998), and a variety of others. However, two primary, broad categories appear to emerge – participatory and practical.

Participatory is also often referred to as critical or emancipatory action research. In participatory action research, there is a strong social and/or community emphasis. The goal is to create some type of emancipation or empowerment and essentially generate change for both society and individuals through effective data gathering, interpretation, and application of knowledge (Creswell, 2002). It centers on resolving “equity, self-reliance, and oppression problems” (Herr & Anderson, 2005, p. 16) and offers a pathway to shift the emphasis of the benefits of research from those who typically possess power to those who can benefit most from its research findings (Thomas, 1995, as cited in

Ryder & Wilson, 1997). Action researcher and organizational development specialist, Richard Schmuck (1997) wrote that participatory action research first became popularized through the work of critical theorist Paolo Freire of Brazil, and later by Stephen Kemmis and Ernest Stringer.

Teachers or administrators specifically seeking to improve practices or performances in their classrooms or institutions would use *practical* action research as an appropriate method. Its primary purpose is to research a particular condition, process, or situation within a school setting with the eventual goal of improving that situation or practice (Schmuck, 1997). It will be the method used in this study. It is more of a *how-to* approach with less of the empowerment or social activist emphasis prevalent in the participatory model. Practical action research makes the assumption that educational administrators and teachers have decision-making authority, want to study what they specifically do, and are committed to continuous improvement and professional development in their schools or institutions (Creswell, 2002; Mills, 2003).

Practical action researchers can either work independently or closely work with practitioners in their field. They identify problems or issues, their causes, and potential solutions (Holter & Schwartz-Barcott, 1993). Practical action research “seeks to deliver more efficient effective practice ‘through the practical skill of the participants’ (Grundy, 1982, as cited in Leitch & Day, 2000, p. 183).

Dickens and Watkins (1999) stated that, “Action research necessitates . . . commitment to improvement” (p. 128). According to them, action research has two primary purposes:

- To improve a practice within an organization, or to improve that organization itself.
- To involve the members of an organization in a process of improvement.

For the purposes of this study involving the author's personal participation in the development and administration of an international distance learning program, these characterizations of action research further endorse its appropriateness as the methodology of choice.

Validity

Qualitative and quantitative researchers often disagree about issues related to validity. Quantitative research obviously entails controlling the collection and examination of numerical data concerning a limited quantity of variables to establish a cause-effect relationship between them. Essentially, statistics are used to determine the relationship being studied.

Broadly speaking, qualitative research refers to "any kind of research that produces findings not arrived at by means of statistical procedures or other means of quantification" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 17). Qualitative research uses more descriptive and narrative data gathering to "understand the way things are and what it means from the perspectives of the research participants" (Mills, 2003, p. 4). As a result of the differences between these methodologies, debates over validity often arise, especially since issues of validity originally have their roots in the more traditional quantitative methods.

Qualitative research can be trustworthy and foundational when compared to quantitative methods (Guba, 1981). This is accomplished by addressing the *credibility*, *transferability*, *dependability*, and *confirmability* criteria of a particular study (Guba, 1981; Guba & Lincoln, 2001).

Credibility “refers to the researcher’s ability to take into account all of the complexities that present themselves in a study and to deal with patterns that are not easily explained” (Mills, 2003, p. 78). To confirm credibility, Guba (1981) suggested a variety of activities, several of which will be addressed. He recommended extended participation at the location where the study will take place. Action research, because one of its primary characteristics is studying one’s own school, department or classroom, helps assure this. This particular inquiry is based at Houston Community College, an institution where I have been employed in the same distance education administration position for six years. My long-term participation in this department and at this institution assures extended participation.

Guba (1981) also recommended peer debriefing. That is, ensuring that researchers provide opportunities for peers, or in this case administrators at both institutions, to have insights into the issue being studied and the data being collected. These opportunities will be made evident and provided in this study through the activities included in documented discussions together with questionnaires involving key administrators and faculty.

To further ensure credibility, Guba (1981) also recommended the careful collection of documents and other artifacts that can provide data in a qualitative study.

This will be done. These primary documents will be included in this treatise.

In the context of qualitative methodology, *transferability* refers to the principle that research is bound within the context that it is studied. The goal of qualitative research is not necessarily to develop or establish generalized truths (Schmuck, 1997) that will be universally valid. Rather, it is that others who review findings can be confident and make “personal judgments of the degree to which findings are sufficiently similar to their own situations” (Guba & Lincoln, 2001, section on Criteria for Assessing the Quality of Constructivist Evaluations and Reports).

To assure transferability, Guba (1981) recommended the careful collection of data that provides the reader of research a context of whether that study can be applicable to the reader’s environment. As mentioned previously, documentation of meetings, discussions, decisions, and other proceedings and artifacts will be provided as part of this action research study. It is anticipated that, since globalization of the community college environment clearly includes expansion of international activities (Romano, 2002) this study will provide a context that is useful for others to consider and/or develop similar programs at their institutions.

In that light, much has been written and researched regarding the internationalization of the community college. Dellow’s (2002) following statement summarizes the path ahead for community colleges and helps address the transferability of this study for other distance learning programs to participate in and contribute to the internationalization and globalization of their institutions:

“The mandate seems clear. To prepare students and communities for a future of greater global interconnectedness, [community] colleges must develop a more global vision for their campuses. To do anything less shortchanges everyone” (Dellow, 2002, p. 12).

To address *dependability*, Guba (1981) recommended including an external audit process that includes determining, “the methodological decisions made and to understand the reasons for them” (Guba & Lincoln, 2001, section on Criteria for Assessing the Quality of Constructivist Evaluations and Reports). Again, through overlapping methods of data collection (i.e., triangulation: questionnaires, discussions, meetings, documentation, collection of distributed materials/handouts), and the group process involved in the development of this international online program, the opportunity for external review and assessment will be confirmed from the perspectives of both participating institutions.

Finally, Guba’s (1981) criteria called for *confirmability*. Confirmability serves to eliminate investigator bias – an important component, and frequent criticism, when conducting qualitatively-based action research where the investigator is actually a participant in the study. To assure confirmability, Guba (1981) and Guba & Lincoln (2001) again called for triangulation as well as reflexivity, described as a practice to “intentionally reveal underlying assumptions or biases that cause the research to . . . present findings in a particular way” (Mills, 2003, p. 80). Charmaz (1995) addressed confirmability as the ability to ensure that the research findings, the resulting subjective product of the researcher, is the result of the raw data, and that they are not simply the,

“observer’s worldview, disciplinary assumptions, theoretical proclivities and research interests (Charmaz, 1995, p. 32, as cited in Pickard & Dixon, 2004).

Triangulation will be addressed through review of multiple documents, accounts of proceedings, and questionnaires completed by various administrative and faculty stakeholders in this project from both institutions. Reflexivity will be addressed through journaling of research activities.

Wolcott (1994) also published strategies and offered a more practical approach for the validity of action research. Through the practices of effective listening, sharing of data with other experts in the field, candidness, seeking feedback, and accurate, consistent, and timely recording techniques, action research can be carried out with truthfulness and validity (Wolcott, as cited in Mills, 2003). In one form or another, all of Wolcott’s (1994) practices outlined above correlate with Guba’s (1981) four criteria. Conversely, the data gathering techniques and information sharing described in previous paragraphs according to the Guba’s (1981) criteria also satisfy the strategies outlined by Wolcott (1994).

For this study of international distance education delivery, another test of valid inquiry should be whether the participating institutions themselves saw benefit in taking part in the action research process – thus indicating the desire for additional practical strategies and principles in such a study from an administrator/practitioner standpoint. In all probability, if this international partnership did not have value, neither college would have initiated it. Further, its participants in this form of action research inquiry wouldn’t have supported it.

A final affirmation of validity is an outgrowth of the above. Does this study have interest to other community colleges? It has been established in previous chapters of this study that there is a sharp rate of growth in international initiatives at community colleges, widespread escalation and increasing capabilities of the Internet, expanding internationalization of the curriculum, a rising need to respond to student and faculty diversity, and increasing globalization of the workforce. When all of these needs and issues are put into the context of the recent rapid enrollment increases in distance learning and an ever-increasing need to create additional revenue streams, it only stands to reason that other community colleges would look to international distance learning programs as a way of addressing these and a variety of other issues. Certainly, this study has validity as a template for how to administratively support such beneficial and timely efforts.

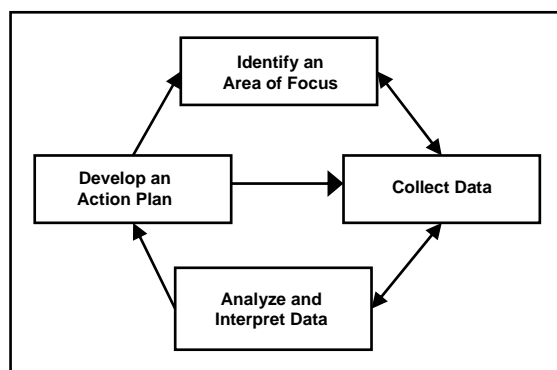
Models for Conducting Action Research

Many models for the application of action research exist. Mills (2000) depicted the action research process in his Dialectic Action Research Spiral (see Figure 1). It outlined the basic steps an action researcher might take to conduct a particular study. Two of the key concepts in Mills' depiction are the cyclical and spiral nature of the research activity. They are common threads throughout nearly all action research models.

These concepts denote an expanding process of repetition and revision in the steps, procedures, and interpretations of the research study (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2006; Mills, 2000). McNiff (2002) described it as the following:

“It is possible to imagine a series of cycles to show the process of developing practice. The processes can be shown as a spiral of cycles, where one issue forms the basis of another and, as one question is addressed, the answer to it generates new questions. Remember that things do not often proceed in a neat, linear fashion. Most people experience research as a zig-zag process of continual review and re-adjustment” (n.p.).

Figure 1. Mills’ dialectic action research spiral.



Source: Mills (2000)

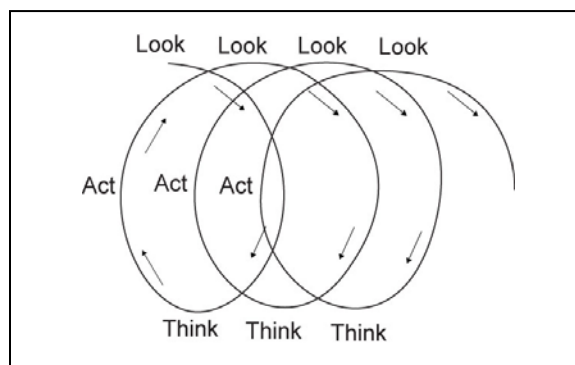
The key steps in this process are clear. An area of educational focus is identified through examining one’s own workplace or classroom. Reconnaissance, or a preliminary information-gathering activity and a review of literature are performed on that specific subject resulting in an action plan. Data are then collected using qualitative, or sometimes quantitative, methods. Once that is done, the data are carefully analyzed and interpreted within the specific setting or area of study. Finally, an action plan is developed and implemented. As a result of observing the effects of that action plan, the

cyclical process can, once again, begin anew with the identification of new areas of focus (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2006).

Mills' model is certainly not the only one nor is it necessarily the most prominent. There are a number of other popular models. However, they all include and promote a cyclical process involving most or all of the following steps: identification of a problem or process, researching it, considering and/or planning on improvement, acting on those plans, observing change and/or collecting data resulting from that action plan, and then reflecting on what has occurred to, once again, begin that same cyclical process.

Stringer (1999) proposed the interacting spiral approach, comprised of the three basic steps of looking, thinking, and acting (see Figure 2). This spiral approach clearly characterizes action research as a process that is not “neat, orderly, and linear” (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2006, p. 611) but rather a non-linear one of continual observation, revision, interpretation, reflection, review, and repetition – all for the ultimate goal of improving of practice and performance.

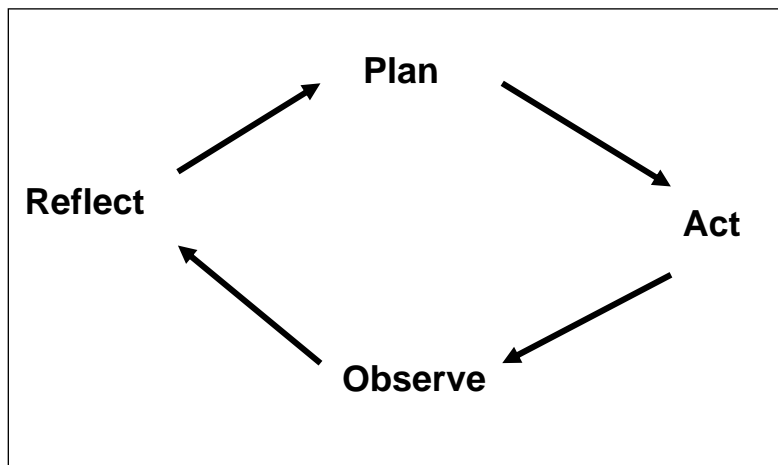
Figure 2. Stringer's action research interacting spiral



Source: Stringer (1999)

Kemmis and McTaggart (1988) centered their focus of action research on teachers. The goal was to improve methods of practice through critical examination of a teacher's own classroom practices. Kemmis and McTaggart (1988) outlined a simple action research cycle through the deliberate, repetitive, and self-reflective steps of planning, acting, observing, and reflecting as depicted in Figure 3.

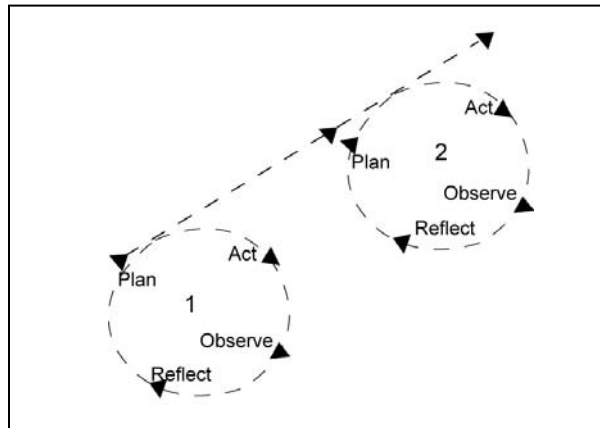
Figure 3. Kemmis & McTaggart's self-reflective cycle



Source: Kemmis & McTaggart (1988)

In Figure 4, Zuber-Skerrit's (1996) model of the action research spiral used the same steps as Kemmis and McTaggart (1988), yet included a graphical representation illustrating a common underlying theme of action research being the "continuous improvement of practice and an extension of personal and professional knowledge" represented by the arrowed line pointing diagonally upward (Hatten, Knapp, & Salonga, 2000).

Figure 4. Zuber-Skerritt's action research spiral



Source: Zuber-Skerritt (1996)

Although there isn't one universally-accepted model outlining the action research process, the Center for Excellence in Education (1998) at Indiana University emphasized, as Karl Lewin originally did, that discussion and feedback are also critical throughout all phases to further explore the central question under examination.

Which Action Research Model Will Be Used?

Now that action research has been presented as an appropriate and viable methodology to approach this study, the task now is to establish a relationship between a specific action model and the research question posed at the beginning of this chapter.

In implementing a research model, it is important to remember that, "There is no one 'right' way of doing action research, of being a teacher researcher, of engaging in critical reflection. Practitioners engaging in these more open, reflective ways are inventing methodology as they go along" (Newman, 2000, Introduction section).

Therefore, in developing an action plan for this study, it is reasonable to implement a common-sense approach to the action research procedure such as the following one offered by McNiff (2002). In essence, it follows the classic *plan, act, observe, and reflect* sequence so common in action research literature:

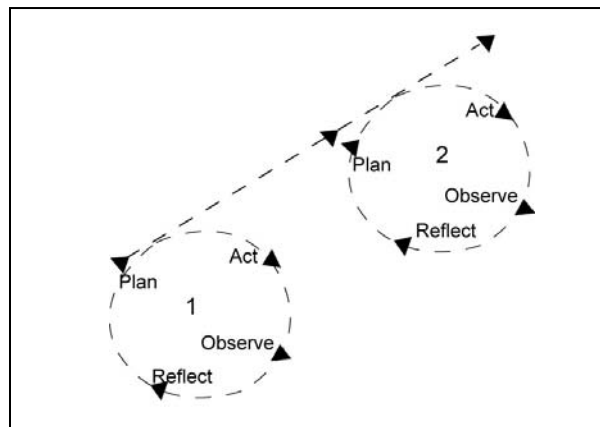
- Review current practice.
- Identify the area to be investigated.
- Conceptualize or imaging a way to move forward with that investigation.
- Try it.
- Observe then evaluate what happens.
- Modify, based on what is discovered.
- Monitor that modification.
- Again, observe, review, and evaluate.

McNiff, Lomax, and Whitehead (1996) not only stressed the previously-mentioned cyclical/spiral nature of this procedure, but also that the order of the above process as well as workplace experiences do not always occur in a neat, organized fashion. Action researchers recognize this. People are unpredictable and workplace situations often take turns we cannot always anticipate. Group decisions can also be irregular and often do not follow a direct route. As a result, an “action research cycle can now turn into new action research cycles, as new [unpredictable] areas of investigation emerge” (McNiff, 2002, How do I do action research? section). Steps in an action research model may not be cleanly or clearly distinguished or separable. “You are likely to find that the steps overlap, and on occasion you may have to revisit early steps” (Dick,

1993, Carrying out your research project section). Finally, what is equally as important, an action research study in a real workplace situation can begin at any point in the cycle and sometimes skip steps. It can begin with planning, acting, observing, or reflecting (Hughes & William, 2001) and, in some cases, not include all of these components.

Because of the irregular and sometimes disordered nature of this process, and the fact that action research is much more of a holistic approach to problem-solving as opposed to a single technique for collecting and analyzing data (O'Brien, 1998), the author chose to implement one of the more basic and straightforward action research models. In what can be a convoluted process, it is vital to keep complications to a minimum with this simpler action research approach. Zuber-Skerritt's (1995) action research spiral, similar to Kemmis & McTaggart's (1988) self-reflective cycle of simply planning, acting, observing, and reflecting was appropriate. It was graphically outlined in the previous section, Models for Conducting Action Research, and repeated in Figure 5.

Figure 5. Zuber-Skerritt's action research spiral



Source: Zuber-Skerritt (1996)

Action Plan

In this study, the author's role as an action researcher was nearly identical with his commitment and position at Houston Community College. As an administrator, the primary goals were to provide a quality distance learning environment for students and faculty by providing a comprehensive variety of courses, programs, and services in support of the college's mission. They must be delivered in a timely, cost-efficient, and customer-oriented method. Online enrollment growth was also a goal. As an action researcher, the goals were the same, but also adding the gathering and interpretation of data on desirable administrative aspects of quality international online delivery.

As mentioned previously, data collection will be accomplished through:

- Observations and accounts of pertinent discussions.
- Questionnaires conducted with key administrators and faculty involved in the project based on administrative information gained during the study.
- The collection and review of documents and other artifacts that will provide data in this qualitative study.

All of the data gathering methods described in this section will be performed within the context of Zuber-Skerritt's (1996) action research spiral model. Because projects evolve, and presumably progress forward, data collected and the resulting knowledge gained will be used to again plan, act, observe, and reflect as graphically indicated in that model. This study is not a controlled experiment that strictly follows the classic dissertation outline based on the linear notion of setting up a formal hypothesis, collecting data, analyzing that data one way according to a prescribed method or

question, etc. Again, action research is spiraling and cyclical. The study will not follow a strictly prescribed order.

Also, with the implementation of programs of this type, gathering of new data will continue to occur throughout the life of the partnership. That is, assuming the joint venture is successful, both HCC and TecMilenio will continue to collect and implement useful data supporting the success of the program. However, as the title of the study indicates, it is limited to the creation of the program, not the maintenance or continuance of it. Therefore, the collection of field data ended with the first students enrolling the initial course offering. Certainly, other studies could be performed on follow up and maintenance of such a program, but that is not the emphasis of this study.

Documentation of Discussions and Other Communications. Documentation of discussions regarding administrative aspects of successful program delivery will be completed in journal form, ensuring that key discussion items are recorded and represented with their original intention. Winter (1987) stressed a key principle that should underlie the gathering of action research data via documentation methods within one's own practice. It is the principle of reflexive critique similar to the concept of reflective practice originated by Schön (1983).

“Truth in a social setting, however, is relative to the teller. The principle of reflective critique ensures people reflect on issues and processes and make explicit the interpretations, biases, assumptions and concerns upon which judgments are made. In this way, practical accounts can give rise to

theoretical considerations” (Winter, as cited in O’Brien, 1998, Principles of Action Research section).

Administrative data and decisions from these discussions will, of course, be reflected on in the context of creating this international online program. Current conditions and potential benefits will be evaluated by the author and other administrative representatives of both institutions to determine their appropriateness for application and implementation. Once they are implemented, observation and reflection will be performed as appropriate to, once again, plan for further modifications and improvements.

In addition to journaling discussions, the collection of pertinent documents, records, and other artifacts will also provide data in this qualitative study. These documents will originate from a variety of sources that include:

- E-mails.
- Documents originating from HCC drafted to support or clarify processes.
- Other published and unpublished documents, memos, etc.

Validation Group and Questionnaire. To ensure that judgment of the work in this study is not simply the author’s sole opinion, the relative importance of administrative conditions beneficial to the development of an international online initiative was also developed and assessed by others. McNiff (2002) supported the convening of a validation group, drawn from the primary professional contacts involved in this venture. Their role was to have shared responsibility for the progress of the

project, scrutinize and prioritize data, as well as ensure validity and provide feedback. They were referred to as the Administrative Development Team.

Because peer review and consultation is a critical component of the action research cycle, a questionnaire rating vital administrative components of success for this online venture will be distributed to the following administrators at both respective institutions who comprise this validation group. Each plays a principal role in the development of the international distance learning project and, in addition to myself, they will also serve as primary participants in this study. They are identified in Table 1 below.

Table 1

Validation Group/Administrative Development Team

<u>Houston Community College</u>	<u>TecMilenio</u>
Project Liaison Distance Education Counselor Distance Education Department	Project Liaison Academic Director of Distance Education Center
Distance Education Counselor Distance Education Department	Director of Development, Distance Education
Executive Director., Instructional Resources and Technology	Vice Rector of Distance Education

As the distance learning partnership matures, and specific courses and faculty are identified to participate in it, faculty will also be requested to respond to the questionnaire. It could be anticipated that a specific bias exists on the part of administrators based on their job responsibilities and priorities. As a result, to better

represent an equitable cross section of opinions of all participants involved in the partnership, faculty directly involved in the project will also be requested to respond.

Referring back to McNiff's (2002) action research procedure described earlier in this section, a key initial step is a review of current practice. The literature review performed in Chapter 2 provides a profile of these practices. In that review, a variety of key administrative issues relating to the effective delivery of international online education emerged. Therefore, some criteria evaluated in the questionnaire will be an outgrowth of that review. Another source of criteria for the questionnaire will be the result of the accounts and documentation of personal discussions and reflections throughout the research cycle. The respective administrators and faculty from both institutions named above will evaluate these issues by order of importance and significance to the success of the online program. Results will be evaluated together with findings from other data collection sources.

Summary

After reviewing the origins of action research, its relevance to this study, its warranted use, samples of action research models, offering a determination and qualification for an suitable model, and how the study will be carried out, there is little doubt that action research is appropriate for this study. Methodologically, action research is at the center of this initiative to establish an international distance learning program between two institutions.

Ultimately, this author is attempting to create and improve a process for the benefit of his college and other community colleges in the future. This is the primary, underlying principle that represents the utilization of this methodology. The plan of action is not strictly prescribed. Rather, to plan, act, observe, and reflect as we progress in an effort to build insight and discover new things about where we work.

“Look in your own backyard. Look at the institution where you practice and the people with whom you interrelate . . . But you must first know your backyard, you must know how to exist in your backyard, and who lives there with you. But, most importantly, think about how you arrived in this backyard . . . and who you have become” (Brooks-Cathcart, 1994, n.p.).

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

Introduction

Certainly not all administrative conditions and issues pertaining to an international online program could be or were examined in this study. The key conditions and issues that arose specifically as a result of the partnership between Houston Community College and TecMilenio are the ones reported here.

They are not unique. This author can envision that most, if not all, of the conditions that arose as a result of this budding partnership would arise with other alliances between community colleges and foreign higher education institutions. However, it is also undeniable that additional ones would also surface.

Most of the findings documented in this chapter were anticipated and identified in the literature review. Several were not. All findings emerged as a result of action research cycles. In this chapter, before each administrative finding is described, a short matrix is also presented to illustrate an overview of that section's findings using the Zuber-Skerritt (1996) rubric steps of planning, implementing, observing, and reflecting.

Action Research Benefits. As emphasized by Dick (2002), this author also found that open discussion and reflection throughout each stage in the action research cycle provided many opportunities to identify issues, clarify them, correct errors, and “get things right.” This is, of course, one of the significant benefits of action research as described in Chapter 3 – Methodology. This became more and more evident as action research steps and cycles progressed. Further, this was especially apparent as steps

within a cycle progressed, when there was difficulty finding the best solution to an issue, or when unique institutional traditions or administrative customs were encountered.

Non-Uniformity of Cycles. It should also be noted that not all of the administrative issues discussed in this chapter underwent a complete action research cycle. This was understandable, especially considering the overall project span of the study, which ended at the enrollment of the first students into the partner college's initial course offering. Therefore, not all conditions were examined by all four steps of planning, implementing, observing, and reflecting. Issues were initiated at various points and sequences in the cycle yet still yielded valuable and significant data. As was cited in Chapter 3, McNiff, Lomax, and Whitehead (1996) noted that, in the workplace, the order of these processes do not always occur in a tidy, sequential fashion. In other words, action research processes may not always be complete nor will they be cleanly or individually isolated. The reader will note this when either reviewing the above-mentioned matrices, the findings, and/or issues presented in Chapter 5, Analysis and Interpretations.

Emphasis on Program Creation, Not Operation. Another reason for not including all potential action research steps in all issues was that this study centered on the creation or establishment of the partnership, not its full implementation, operation, or long-term maintenance. For many of the issues that emerged and were reported, follow up steps such as observation and evaluation would need to be implemented after initiation of the program, which was beyond the ending point for collection of field data and not in the overall scope of the study. For example, administrative study of the full impact of

language and language proficiency, financial considerations, online testing, or accountability issues would need to be examined a minimum of one semester or further into the partnership to fully measure its effects.

Format for Reporting Findings. At times, it was also difficult to define the boundaries between steps in the action research cycle. In particular, planning could sometimes be perceived as implementation. Although steps are outlined in the matrices, the author found it more valuable to not overly rely on categorizing and strictly reporting all findings as separate, distinct, and clearly delineated steps (i.e., plans, implementation, observations, and reflections) or complete action research cycles. Rather, a more holistic and narrative approach was determined to describe the issues by topic area. That way, an entire administrative issue could be tracked through its development and maturation, with the reader more easily observing the flow or continuum of activities and developments throughout the study. Using this reporting method, this author believed that the reader's navigation through this dynamic process could be better facilitated. The confusion that occurred between step identification and/or administrative conditions was potentially avoided.

Project Liaisons. A final introductory note of critical importance is that, because this study emphasized the broad identification of wide-ranging administrative issues, it did not explore the minute details of accomplishing each. As will be discussed, project liaisons along with other student services and operations staff, were assigned these more detailed responsibilities. Primary effort for this study was centered on key administrative condition identification.

The primary administrative conditions identified are listed in the table below.

Table 2

Primary Administrative Conditions Identified

• Mission	• Establishment of Academic Dev. Team
• Language Proficiency	• Program Selection
• Financial Considerations	• Marketing
• Academic Calendars	• Technical Support
• Accreditation	• Accountability/Institutional Effectiveness
• Faculty Training	• Grade Reporting
• Testing/Admin. of Exams	• Student Services

An expanded list, including all action research steps involved, is presented as Table 23 in Chapter 5. The remainder of this chapter presents each issue in more detail.

Mission

Table 3

Mission Matrix

Plan:	• Discuss viability and applicability of proposed partnership with key administrators (department chair, dean). Get approval.
Implement:	
Observe:	• Comparison of mission statements/strategic plans.
Reflect:	• Reflection/evaluation revealed strong commonalities in strategic direction.

Mission as Primary Project Determinant. The issue of mission was one that, as mentioned above, did not undergo the full action research cycle. However, it emerged early as a key administrative condition necessary for the successful establishment of this program. In fact, it was the first issue discussed when determining whether an international distance learning partnership should be included as one of the components of the overall economic development project between the institutions.

In the planning step, discussions were held with both the department chair of the Business Administration program at HCC and the Workforce Dean, Northeast College (the HCC college from which the Business Administration program is offered) to determine overall viability and applicability to departmental mission and direction. Both individuals agreed that this program should be pursued because of potential gains in regard to globalization of the curriculum, the integration of TecMilenio and HCC students, and revenue opportunities.

Through planning conversations, representatives of both institutions met and immediately discussed strategic priorities from their respective colleges. All parties assured each other that it was in the best interest of each institution to continue developing this program because it followed the individual missions and supporting strategies of both. Internationalization of programs was of key strategic interest and it was established that the online partnership was one way to accomplish this in a cost-effective and student services-oriented way. It was discussed that both TecMilenio and HCC had strong traditions in online programs – TecMilenio’s primarily stemming from its parent institution, Monterrey Tec, and their well-established Universidad Virtual.

Both colleges confirmed that expansion of these programs both in terms of enrollment and internationalization was a goal.

Matrix of Introductory Issues. A matrix initially outlining some critical success issues was also distributed and discussed. It is included as Appendix A. The purpose or emphasis of this document was not to comprehensively focus on initially listing every administrative topic that might be considered or addressed in the partnership. Rather, early in the development process, it was to create a starting point for discussion and to build a consensus of shared responsibility. In Chapter 2, the literature revealed that overall success can be compromised or threatened if one college takes full control of the relationship or has final decision-making authority in all aspects of the partnership (Moran & Mugridge, 1993). If this were the case, it would be difficult for the partnership to flourish. Therefore, it was the intent of this author, as a participant and stakeholder in the development of this project, to immediately establish that responsibility for nearly all facets of success would be shared between both schools and to create a starting point for discussions.

Findings regarding mission in both the observation and reflection phases were found to be consistent with what was revealed in the literature. Strategic priorities were compared and determined first before moving forward with any further commitment. It was also openly discussed and agreed that, if the strategic goals of both institutions did not compare favorably, there was little to no reason to continue discussions on further program development.

Buy In From Other Institutional Stakeholders. As a final point, HCC administrators stressed the importance of the partnership gaining support and buy-in from not only the appropriate department chairs, but also the appropriate deans, etc. when pursuing this partnership. Accordingly, the author, as one of the primary participants in the Administrative Development Team, approached the appropriate academic administrators from the representative college(s) to seek their approval with the proposed enterprise. That approval was gained.

Clearly, consistency of institution mission immediately emerged as a key administrative condition that must be present for successful establishment of the program.

Establishment of an Administrative Development Team

Table 4

Establishment of an Administrative Development Team Matrix

Plan:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss need for administrative development team. • Identify potential team members.
Implement:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assign each team member to project. • Identify primary project liaison from each institution.
Observe:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Observe performance and proficiency of each member through their level of response and timely contribution to the project
Reflect:	

Importance of the Team. The need for a development team surfaced as both obvious and imperative. As one would expect, it emerged in the first step of the action research process – planning. To effectively develop this program along a progressive continuum leading toward the successful enrollment and support of students, a functional and results-driven administrative development team needed to be immediately identified.

As described in Chapter 3 – Methodology, this team also served as the foundation of the validation group in this study.

Diversity and Commitment. Implementation of this cycle required that selection of team members be based on areas of responsibility and their ability to contribute to program development in a timely way. Essentially, before assignment, they were required to commit to the development of the program and not be over-encumbered by other job commitments. Much of the success of the program was dependent on commitment, timeliness, and efficiency. That began with selection of administrative team members.

Selection of Project Liaison. Another critical component of the implementation step included the selection of a primary project liaison representing each institution. In the planning step, it was clearly determined that there must be one individual from each college who served as the primary contact and conduit of information, activity, and progress, reporting regularly to administrators in charge of the overall program. These two individuals were first-line responders and responsible for overall functional operation and success of the program on a day-to-day basis. Without them, clear identification of each aspect of program progress, its level and stage of progress, and establishment of a reliable source of information about each would be compromised. Bilingualism was also a necessary skill for liaisons from both colleges.

A current Distance Education Counselor, was identified as the liaison representing HCC. The Academic Director of the Distance Education Center was

identified as the liaison from TecMilenio. The entire Administrative Development Team was identified in Chapter 3, Methodology.

For HCC, it was both essential and expedient that this liaison have a strong background in student services. This was the primary rationale behind the selection of a current Distance Education Counselor to serve in this capacity. That individual is also bilingual.

Efficient Team Function. Throughout the study, it was evident that all members of the team functioned well together and were committed to the overall goals of the international partnership. Although some members participated more actively than others, assigned work and follow up actions were performed in a timely and efficient manner by all. There were no significant language issues that either hindered communication or documentation.

Language and Language Proficiency

Table 5

Language and Language Proficiency Matrix

Plan:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss bilingual student populations at each institution. • Discuss language(s) for courses to be offered. • Discuss minimum standards with TM staff for both English & Spanish proficiency.
Implement:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All courses originating from HCC taught in English. All courses originating from TecMilenio taught in Spanish. • Established minimum scores from HCC: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 500 (paper), 213 (computer-based), 79 (web-based) • TecMilenio – used WebCAPE as Spanish proficiency exam
Observe:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TecMilenio reported that minimum TOEFL scores may pose a problem for many students and limit potential enrollment.
Reflect:	

The Value of Language Diversity. Early in the research cycles, the issue of language emerged as a critical component for discussion, decision, and support. The literature review revealed that, to a large degree, English is the predominant worldwide language for offering not only international education programs. However, because of changing demographics and the resulting growth of Latino and Asian speaking populations and markets both in this country and worldwide, this language predominance may soon need to be revisited. This would certainly hold true for online programs extended to other nations.

In the context of this proposed partnership, it was recognized early in the planning stage of the cycle that both institutions enrolled a “larger-than-usual” percentage of bilingual (English-Spanish) students. In fact, along with mission, the strong bilingual characteristics of both colleges and their respective communities was one of the primary drivers supporting the originally-proposed economic development project.

Because of this characteristic, it was initially determined to implement a single pilot course from HCC in English and concurrently, a course in Spanish from TecMilenio. Although it was also immediately recognized that these decisions may limit the prospective student enrollment base, the large number of bilingual students at each college would initially provide a sufficient market.

Establishment of Proficiency Levels. Levels of language proficiency clearly needed to be determined. It was decided that, for the community college involved in this online program, minimum TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) scores should be established and clearly communicated. HCC used the following TOEFL

requirements. Except for the paper-based examination (which was usually 550), the minimum scores were the same as they were for any non-native English speaking student, whether enrolled in this online partnership or not:

- TOEFL paper-based examination Minimum score: 500
- TOEFL computer-based examination Minimum score: 213
- TOEFL web-based examination Minimum score: 79

It should also be noted that the TOEFL exam is just one tool HCC used to determine language proficiency and determine student readiness. HCC also had some flexibility in regard to using the specific scores noted above as strict limits of acceptable language skills.

According to the TecMilenio liaison, these minimum English proficiency requirements did not originally pose a problem for most TecMilenio students in that many were described as bilingual in the planning step. However, further observations in the research cycle revealed that these scores may restrict recruitment and potential enrollment.

The TecMilenio liaison was also asked about their minimum Spanish language proficiency requirements for foreign students. This information was necessary to properly screen potential applicants from HCC. Although it was the belief of HCC staff that these proficiencies should have been determined by TecMilenio, HCC also investigated online exams and provided recommendations to TecMilenio. Ultimately, TecMilenio determined that the Spanish proficiency instrument to be used would be WebCAPE (BYU WebCAPE, 2004), a computerized language placement exam. In an

individualized testing environment, it assesses levels of proficiency in Spanish grammar, reading, and vocabulary. Minimum proficiency scores for HCC students taking TecMilenio courses were also established.

Language issues also impacted other findings. They will be addressed in this chapter and Chapter 5, Analysis and Interpretations.

Program Selection

Table 6

Program Selection Matrix

Plan:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review current online course and degree offerings from each college. Determine appropriate academic/workforce program to first offer students.
Implement:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • International Business curriculum chosen. • Ensure all courses available online. • Chose initial HCC course as first offering to TM students – Introduction to Business. • Chose initial TecMilenio course as first offering to HCC students - Administración. • Pre-evaluation of initial/pilot course. • Develop additional courses not currently available on line.
Observe:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review both institutions’ initial course offerings for appropriateness as an introductory course.
Reflect:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decision not to offer pilot course in summer.

Rationale for Program and Initial Course Selection. Another key finding involved the selection of the appropriate curriculum to offer students. At this writing, HCC offered nearly 500 distance education class sections comprised of over 200 distinct courses, four online degree programs, three certificate programs, and a variety of specialization areas or “majors” in those programs. TecMilenio offered 15 separate online degree programs. In other words, choices were plentiful. It was determined that

an A.A.S. in International Business, a degree program offered by both colleges, would be selected for initial introduction. It was selected for a variety of reasons:

- Both institutions have a common strategic emphasis on workforce programs.
- The online program offered was one already provided by both HCC and TecMilenio. That way, interest on the part of students and course exchanges and transfers might be more easily accomplished and facilitated.
- 15 of the 20 courses required for the International Business A.A.S. degree at HCC were already available and offered to students on line. Prioritization was placed on the development of the additional five courses required for the complete degree.
- The development of a complete online degree program in this area would create opportunities for this curriculum to be offered to both additional HCC and international students from other countries and programs in the future.

Once selected, discussions began in the implementation phase on which course(s) in those degree programs to offer to students first. It was determined that the most appropriate way to start was to offer one initial pilot course from each institution. With that course, both partners could introduce their online format and course management software to students from the other college, students, faculty and administrators could evaluate its individual strengths and weaknesses, and then use that information to grow the program with additional courses in the future. Essentially, in regard to the introduction of the first course(s), an agreement to “walk before you run” theme was agreed upon.

As a pilot course, HCC originally selected an economics course (ECON 2302) in the International Business curriculum. However, that was later revised to an initial offering of Introduction to Business (BUSG 1301) because it was an introductory course in the curriculum and the instructor teaching that online class had many years of experience in distance learning at HCC. Further, state transfer and equivalency requirements for academic courses (i.e., ECON 2302) were more stringent than those for workforce courses (i.e., BUSG 1301). TecMilenio selected a pilot course entitled Administración (PNO4002), as the introductory course in their curriculum.

Initial Course Review and Availability to Students. In the observation step, both courses were extensively reviewed by the other institution for appropriateness as an introductory course and for equivalence. More detailed information on course equivalency was provided in the Accreditation section of this chapter.

After much discussion, it was eventually determined to delay full enrollment (15-20 students) in the pilot course until the fall 06 semester. This was done in consultation with a variety of HCC administrators and with the approval of TecMilenio. It was determined that there were a host of student service and other related “loose ends” existing for HCC to feel comfortable offering the pilot course. These included issues such as student ID’s, finalized enrollment processes, state reporting requirements, course equivalency, calendar issues, marketing, some financial considerations, and the establishment of appropriate student services web resources. Instead, it was determined that a much more limited number of students would be admitted for the initial course

offering. Their experience with that initial offering would then be evaluated and future expansion of enrollment would be based on this assessment and other factors.

Development of All Courses in Degree Program. As part of the implementation step, discussions were also conducted regarding development of all courses in the International Business degree plan. In fact, five courses in the degree plan still required development. Discussions were held with the Business Administration department chair to ensure that development would immediately begin. The possibility of offering shortened (five- or eight-week) versions was also discussed in an attempt to more closely align with TecMilenio’s academic calendar (see Academic Calendar section in this chapter). Course development for these courses began soon after discussions were held.

Financial Considerations

Table 7

Financial Considerations Matrix

Plan:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss tuition rates for students at both colleges • Total agreed tuition per course is \$286. • Financial aid/scholarships. • Discuss how transfer of funds will be accomplished.
Implement:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HCC will charge \$257.40 per course to TecMilenio students. TecMilenio students will pay regular tuition of \$286, and 90% (or \$257.40) goes to the school delivering the course (HCC) and 10% goes to the school registering the student. • Setup institutional accounts for revenues and expenditures. • Transfer of tuition revenue to/from each college. Establish schedules and deadlines.
Observe:	
Reflect:	

Internal Funding. Naturally, financial issues, and particularly revenue, were of primary concern and interest to both colleges. Internal funding issues particular to HCC, that is, determining how to fund offering the first courses, travel, staff time, etc. were justified and allocated through the Distance Education Department's participation in the overall economic development project. More specifically related to coursework, HCC would offer the program's initial course, Introduction to Business, to its own online students regardless of the existence of this potential partnership. Therefore, funding for that course, and the faculty teaching it, were already allocated.

Consistent Tuition Rates. In the planning step of the research cycle, a variety of issues related to finance and funding emerged. First, it became evident that it was critically important to plan, establish, and finalize tuition rates charged to students. To do that, rates were compared between the two institutions. Although significant differences existed in regard to course duration (see Academic Calendars section) as well as comparability between HCC's in-district tuition and TecMilenio's, it was also imperative that rates be equivalent. This was done to avoid having one college significantly underprice the other. Obviously, this would create a distinct tuition advantage for one institution and, as a result, cause a substantially larger number of students to enroll at one college compared to the other.

Through both planning and observation steps, it was revealed that TecMilenio's tuition was higher than HCC's in-district tuition as reflected in Table 8.

Table 8

Tuition Comparison, Houston Community College and TecMilenio

<u>Houston Community College (in-district)</u>	<u>TecMilenio</u>
\$153 USD + \$24 distance education fee = \$177 per class	\$286 USD (converted from pesos) per class

TecMilenio representatives strongly maintained that their tuition could not be lowered. Therefore, since HCC’s in-district tuition was significantly less, and to create an even playing field for both institutions, HCC and TecMilenio agreed that a standard tuition rate of \$286/class would be charged to all students, regardless of which college the course was offered from. Additionally, it was agreed that the college offering the course would receive 90% of the \$286 tuition, or \$257.40. The home college, or the college registering the student, would retain a service fee of 10% of the total tuition, or \$28.60, for each registered student.

Scholarships. Because in-district HCC students were being charged a higher tuition for TecMilenio courses than they would normally pay for the equivalent course at HCC, a scholarship fund was established to assist them through the HCC Foundation. The HCC students registering for the first course offered in the summer ’06 semester would also receive full financial aid in the form of a scholarship to defray the entire cost of the course. In exchange for this scholarship, these initial students agreed to provide feedback on their experience. After the first introductory summer course, it was not yet determined if HCC students would pay the full \$286 tuition or pay the in-district rate and be supplemented by the scholarship amount indicated in Table 9 below.

Table 9

Financial Aid/Scholarship Assistance Provided to HCC students

\$286.00	standard tuition rate for all partnership classes
<u>\$177.00</u>	in-district tuition/fees for HCC student enrolling in online course
\$109.00	scholarship amount awarded per student for initial course offering

Establishment of Revenue/Expense Accounts. At HCC, in both the planning and implementation stages of the cycle, revenue and expense accounts were established specifically for this program to manage and account for the flow of funds. This way, finances could be tracked for the purposes of both accounting and accountability/outcomes.

The issue of transfer of funds also emerged in the planning and implementation cycles. HCC determined that procedures for both payments and receivables needed to be established and developed. Discussions were held with the staff representing the Office of Financial and Budgetary Control. Accounts payable and receivable were created along with procedures and deadlines for both. It was determined that transfers in and out of both funds would occur after the last day students are eligible for tuition refunds to enable more accurate accounting and reduce the need for additional financial adjustments. For the summer semester at HCC, this date was approximately 15 calendar days after the beginning of the semester. That way, all student withdrawals and receipts would be accounted for prior to that payment deadline.

Marketing

Table 10

Marketing Matrix

Plan:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Discussion of marketing plans and costs. Ensure revenue opportunities for both colleges.• Initial marketing strategies for recruitment of TecMilenio students to enroll in first HCC course.
Implement:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Create screening tool for student recruitment and marketing.
Observe:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Insufficient preparation time for offering of full pilot course in summer
Reflect:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Revise enrollment in initial course offering. Revise scope of marketing appropriately.

Marketing and advertising of the program entered the action research cycle at the planning step. Achieving adequate enrollment, and the resulting revenue generation, was an issue of utmost importance to both colleges. Appropriate and effective marketing strategies would help ensure this outcome. They were discussed from the initiation of partnership formation.

Initial Marketing Strategies. From the HCC perspective, the marketing issues discussed in the planning phase involved how/where the program would be marketed toward HCC students enrolling in TecMilenio courses. A comprehensive list of suggestions included:

- Announcing and publicizing the program through a web link on the HCC home page.
- Announcing the program through a web link on the Distance Education home page.

- Placing an ad in the printed Distance Education Course Schedule.
- Having instructors mention the program in their Intensive English classes that TecMilenio students are enrolled in.
- Placing ads in the *Egalitarian*, HCC's student newspaper.
- Producing a flyer/handout for distribution at all HCC colleges.
- Placing an ad and a web link to a program description in the HCC WebCT login page. This is the page all registered distance education students at HCC must use to access their classes.
- Announcing the program through the HCC Northeast College Business Dept. This was the department that offers all online courses for the International Business degree program for HCC.
- Using the services of HCC recruiters currently on staff at each of the colleges.
- Marketing the program through HCC student organizations and particularly, the HCC International Student Association.
- Present the program to all HCC Counselors at monthly in-service sessions.

Certainly not all of these recommendations were implemented in the initial phase, nor was that intended. It was discussed and agreed that two of the primary drivers from which marketing strategies were to be implemented, and at what time, were cost and differentiation between the initial course offering in the summer semester and the pilot course(s) offered in the fall. Each of the above strategies was mentioned as a possibility. Each would be examined further during the weeks preceding the offering of the first course, during the summer 06 semester, and finally during ongoing implementation of the

program.

Selected Marketing Strategies. Initial marketing activities in preparation for the first course offering were planned. These entailed:

- Sending emails from HCC distance education counselors primarily to existing distance learning students in Business Administration inviting them to take a course from TecMilenio. It was discussed and decided that these students would have a greater degree of experience with this delivery mode than simply marketing to all current or prospective HCC students. It was also important to involve counselors in this recruitment process because they had already established relationships with these prospective students. A copy of this email is included as Appendix B. Together with the distance education counseling staff, an additional marketing strategy that was involved the professor for the initial HCC course, BUSG 1301, personally emailing business majors who were fluent in Spanish to discuss the possibility of taking the initial course.
- A screening tool assisting students and counselors to determine eligibility and potential success in the program.

Marketing Limited by Initial Enrollment Decision. However, an important decision was made in the evaluation step of the Program Selection cycle that clearly affected marketing for the initial introduction of this online partnership. As was described in that section, it was determined that a pilot course offered to 10-15 students would not be provided at first because of insufficient preparation time, particularly in regard to a variety of student and administrative services and issues. Instead, the

introduction of the program, and first student enrollment, would still be offered during the summer semester, yet include only three to five students from each institution. Their experience would then be evaluated at the end of the summer semester, prior to actually offering the first pilot course. As a result, marketing efforts would be appropriately scaled down.

Effective Screening as a Marketing Tool. A student service-related marketing concern also emerged in the planning step. The issue involved student readiness for the program and how to effectively screen those students through a marketing tool. To help ensure student success during the introductory phase of the partnership, it was determined that students should be screened in a number of areas. A variety of student readiness and informational questions were included in this screening, with the primary ones being adequate language skills and previous experience with online learning. Others included interest in taking courses from the Business curriculum, personal identification, tuition, calendars, and a refund policy. A draft of the admission screening tool is included as Appendix C. Screening was performed by distance education counselors and the professor teaching the introductory course. Essentially, the screening tool served as a preliminary marketing tool, assisting students and counselors to determine eligibility and potential success in the program.

Marketing Costs. Although cost of marketing and advertising strategies was of initial concern, it did not surface in this study as a key component of marketing because of timing. Because this study ended with the enrollment of the first few students in the first course, costs were essentially minimal. As the project matures and grows, these

costs will need to be examined more closely, but they are not in the immediate scope or timeline of this study.

Importance of Partner Institution Marketing Efforts. Although this study emphasized the development of the partnership from the HCC perspective, marketing strategies employed by TecMilenio to recruit students were also found to be of utmost importance to HCC. The revenues generated for HCC as a result of TecMilenio’s success in enrolling their students in courses were an obvious and critically important revenue-related outcome of the overall partnership.

During the planning phase, TecMilenio’s liaison for the partnership indicated that TecMilenio would provide a description of initial marketing strategies based both on the HCC list mentioned above and other concepts. The liaison did so after consultation with another member of the validation group, the Director of Development for Distance Education at TecMilenio. For the initial course offering only, TecMilenio limited their marketing to emailing existing students.

Academic Calendars

Table 11

Academic Calendars Matrix

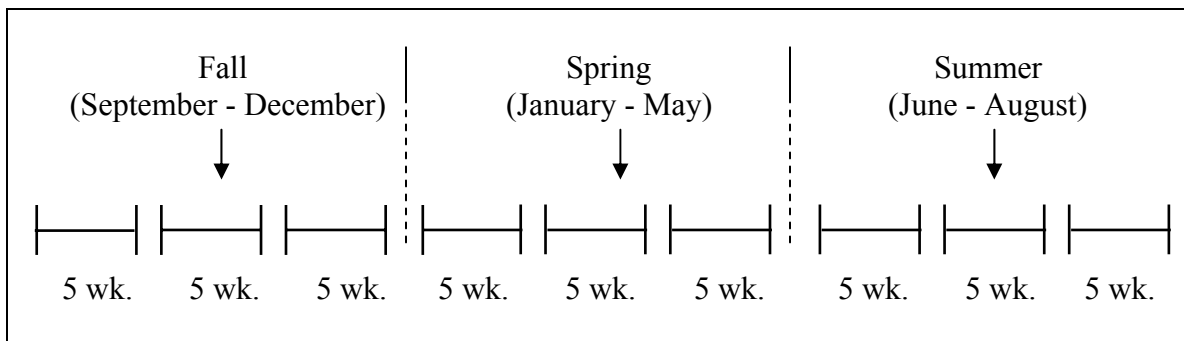
Plan:	• Comparison of academic calendars
Implement:	• Revise course schedules (if necessary) to prepare for initial course student enrollment.
Observe:	• Observe acceptability of initial class in regard to course duration.
Reflect:	• Evaluate and make projections for length of future classes.

Comparison of Academic Calendars. Early in the planning step, it became evident that the academic calendars for HCC and TecMilenio had both significant similarities and differences. Comparison of semester and teaching schedules revealed that their coordination would be of critical importance. Concurrently, it would also be difficult and inconvenient for students to take classes that did not coordinate or if academic schedules overlapped or conflicted with the schedules of their home institutions.

It was also found during the planning phase that TecMilenio’s academic calendar was depicted as a trimester system, yet essentially functioned during the same time periods as HCC’s three annual semesters – fall, spring, and summer. Therefore, the semesters aligned more closely than initially anticipated. However, the individual class lengths within the semesters did not. This is graphically represented in Table 12 with further explanations following.

Table 12

TecMilenio academic calendar



Each of the three TecMilenio trimesters consisted of three, five-week classes (or modules). Students typically enrolled in two modules during each five-week session. Each module met in either the physical or virtual classroom for a total of four weeks. The final or fifth week, was reserved for study, examination reviews, and taking final exams. For each module completed successfully, the student received one credit. Students were required to earn 54 credits to meet degree completion requirements. Therefore, a full-time student taking 2 modules each 5 weeks, or 6 modules per trimester, would then earn 18 credits per year. It would take that student three years to earn their degree.

HCC's academic calendar followed the traditional semester schedule. TecMilenio's trimester compared favorably with it, being nearly identical with respect to HCC's fall, spring, and summer semesters.

Comparison of Course Lengths. HCC also offered some alternate length distance education courses each semester. Both eight- and five-week courses, providing full credit, were offered as options in all three semesters. Although preparing a five-week course offering was best for the partnership with TecMilenio, since it matched their "module" class schedule, it was determined by HCC that student success could be significantly compromised if all of the course content included in BUSG 1301 – Introduction to Business were packaged in such a short time period. This accelerated schedule may have worked for other classes and/or other disciplines, but this particular course material was deemed too intensive by the instructor to compress into a five-week

class. It was decided by HCC, and accepted by TecMilenio, to offer the full semester version of this class as the first course offering.

In the reflection/evaluation step, it was determined that future classes would need to be considered individually for length. If possible, five-week versions of HCC online classes were preferred, although not required. This would not only enhance uniformity and flexibility between both institutions for this international online partnership, but also expand offerings and flexibility for the usual HCC students normally enrolled in online classes. Through the evaluation step, the expansion of flex entry course offerings also surfaced as an area for future examination in this program.

Clearly, the coordination of not only institutional academic calendars but class calendars and class length emerged as critical issues to consider in this program.

Technical Support

Table 13

Technical Support Matrix

Plan:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make technical support available for both course management system platforms.
Implement:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure availability of bilingual technical support services.
Observe:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review WebTec, the course management system used by TecMilenio. • Observe quality of bilingual services.
Reflect:	

Support for Course Management Systems. Because of the emphasis on technical support in the review of literature, the author anticipated significantly more activity and data involving coordinated and successful establishment of technical support

than what emerged. However, during the planning step it was agreed that well-organized and comprehensive technical support services must be provided to all students. HCC used a different course management system (WebCT) than TecMilenio (WebTec), yet it was found that both institutions had extensive technical support existing not only for their internal distance learning operations, but for students from the partnering institution.

Bilingual Technical Support. What required implementation was to ensure that bilingual support was available, despite the fact that all students who would participate in the program were bilingual. It was broadly discussed that students required technical support in their native language, particularly when requesting assistance with distance learning-related issues and nuances. Both institutions provided bilingual services in this area. It was also discussed that this same support could be provided to staff from each institution that had questions or sought technical assistance.

During the study, few technical support issues required bilingual services. However, the small number of issues or discussions that occurred between either administrators or technicians was complete and entirely uninhibited by language or translation concerns.

Evaluation of Partner's Course Management System. TecMilenio's course management system, WebTec, was a "home grown" platform developed by La Universidad Virtual, the online subsidiary university of Monterrey Tec. However, in the observation step of this topic area, WebTec was found to be very extensive in its features and services – in some ways, more extensive than the commercially available platform purchased and used by HCC. HCC staff reviewed a TecMilenio sample course designed

with WebTec and found not only the course to be comprehensive and complete, but the supporting software to be extensive and innovative.

Accreditation

Table 14

Accreditation Matrix

Plan:	• Review current accreditation status of both institutions.
Implement:	• Arrange for registration and course equivalency measures to accept courses from TecMilenio.
Observe:	
Reflect:	

Accommodating for Lack of Accreditation. Accreditation issues were extensively examined. They would not have emerged as an issue in any of the action research steps if it had not become apparent in planning that TecMilenio did not currently carry accreditation nor was it immediately pursuing it. HCC carried accreditation from the Southern Association of Schools and Colleges (SACS). Also, as described in Chapter 1, both TecMilenio’s parent institution, Monterrey Tec, and its online subsidiary, La Universidad Virtual, both held full accreditation from SACS.

As a result of TecMilenio’s current status, it was agreed that students from each institution would not be required to apply for admission to the partnering college. All students would remain students at their home institutions and register for courses at their home institutions as well. They would be added to the partner institution’s class through the online course management software only.

From the HCC perspective, it was responsible for reviewing the course from TecMilenio for rigor and equivalency prior to it being offered. Determining course equivalency was the responsibility of the appropriate instructor, department chair, and dean. Thus, the TecMilenio class would be transcribed and would, therefore, be accredited by HCC. A HCC instructor would have full online access to that course and serve as the instructor of record, continually communicating with students and TecMilenio faculty regarding progress and learning. That instructor of record would also post grades for the HCC students enrolled. That course would also not be reported for funding to the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board during the pilot phase.

Accountability/Institutional Effectiveness

Table 15

Accountability/Institutional Effectiveness Matrix

Plan:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review importance of accountability in the partnership. • Determine areas of data collection and evaluation. • Plan for state reporting of classes.
Implement:	
Observe:	
Reflect:	

The Importance of Accountability. Accountability was another issue that was incomplete in its treatment in the action research cycle. Since the study ended with enrollment of the first students in the first class, many outcome measures of a successful international partnership could not be compiled or analyzed. However, planning occurred in two phases – ensuring the critical importance of accountability in the

partnership, particularly from the HCC perspective, and determining specific areas for data collection and evaluation.

The importance of accountability underscores nearly all programs and activities at HCC. In terms of applicability toward this partnership, it did not require further emphasis. Academic program reviews, annual evaluations, performance budgeting, and HCC's new Organizational Planning Utility System (Houston Community College System, 2006), a new system initiated to enter action plans, track progress, and generally support planning, budgeting, and reporting activity, are all examples of ongoing accountability activities at the community college. These areas of emphasis were discussed with TecMilenio representatives in the planning step.

What required additional planning in this study, and eventual implementation, observation, and evaluation in the later stages of the partnership beyond program establishment, was determining the specific areas for accountability and evaluation. Initial planning indicated the following preliminary areas for data collection:

- Student enrollment (duplicated and unduplicated)
- Tracking which/when courses were taken. Gauge popularity of specific courses.
- Grade distribution profiles.
- Results of Student Evaluation of Instruction (SEOI).
- Graduation rates for students in at least one course program.
- Revenues generated from program.
- Assessing a variety of student engagement measures.

State Reporting of Classes. Finally, an issue that arose in the planning phase involved determining how courses that HCC students would be taking from TecMilenio would be classified for state reporting. It was determined that, after consultation with other college administrators including the Vice Chancellor for Instruction, the Manager of Educational Partnerships, and the Registrar, that HCC certainly could not come to that determination alone. It was decided that a letter be drafted by these administrators and sent to the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board. That letter would describe the course exchange program and request guidance for state reporting purposes. Summer course enrollment in the initial course offering (3-5 students) would not be reported for state reimbursement.

Faculty Training

Table 16

Faculty Training Matrix

Plan:	• Review faculty training requirements
Implement:	• Ensure faculty chosen for initial course had required training and significant field experience.
Observe:	
Reflect:	

Review and Ensure Training Requirements Are Met. Another area of administrative concern involved faculty training. Online faculty training requirements specific to each institution were reviewed. Representatives from both colleges stressed the importance of selecting faculty that not only completed those minimum training requirements for their institution, but also possessed a significant amount of experience

teaching online courses. Working with international students was identified as an added, but not required skill since so few faculty have international experience. The training requirements at each institution were reviewed and are listed in Table 17 below.

Table 17

Distance Education Faculty Training Requirements

<u>HCC</u>	<u>TecMilenio</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Faculty Certification in Technology (Basic Level). Includes 44 contact hours (11, 4-hour classes) including Orientation to Distance Learning at HCC. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One primary 8-hour training and orientation course is now mandatory. • 2 more additional mandatory classes for faculty are currently under development.

Grade Reporting

Table 18

Grade Reporting Matrix

Plan:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review grading system from both colleges.
Implement:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that grades are given that are consistent with the partner college's existing grading system.
Observe:	
Reflect:	

Ensure Consistency in Grade Reporting. Again in the planning step, grading and grade reporting came to light as an issue for administrative consideration. It revealed dissimilar grade reporting methods at each partnering institution. This is depicted in Table 19.

Table 19

Grade Reporting Methods Used at HCC and TecMilenio

<u>HCC grading system</u>	<u>TecMilenio grading system</u>
A, B, C, D, F (below 65 is not a passing grade)	Only number grades are reported. 70 is a passing grade. Students must score above 65 on final exam to pass course.

As a result of the differences outlined above, coordination was required to appropriately report scores to the partner institution. More specifically, HCC faculty were required to report number grades to TecMilenio for their students enrolled in their HCC classes. Conversely, TecMilenio faculty were required to do the same for HCC.

Discussions regarding transfer of course grades were also addressed in the planning step. It was decided that the instructor of record at TecMelenio will report the final number grade to the HCC liaison. The HCC liaison will then report the numeric grade to the HCC instructor of record for it to be converted into a letter grade and posted for the student and his/her transcript. Likewise, the instructor at HCC will report a numeric grade to the TecMilenio liaison. That liaison will then report the numeric grade to the TecMilenio instructor of record for the grade to be posted. Outside of developing this plan, no observation or reflection steps regarding this issue took place.

Testing/Administration of Examinations

Table 20

Testing/Administration of Examinations Matrix

Plan:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review how testing is administered with distance education courses from both colleges.
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Testing/Administration of Examinations Matrix continued

Implement:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• For consistency, implement similar testing environments within courses offered.• Revise initial course offering, BUSG 1301, to provide online testing only.
Observe:	
Reflect:	

Reconcile Online and On-Campus Testing Procedures. A review of testing procedures came to the forefront in the development of the partnership. In the planning step, it was important to review the testing procedures used by each of the institutions to ensure consistency for students.

It was evident there were differences. TecMilenio strictly used an online testing environment for all distance learning classes offered. There was no paper-based testing administered at all. That is, every examination in every online class offered by TecMilenio was provided via the Internet from within the specific web-based course being provided. From course to course, there were some variances in test organization or structure. But generally, for each student, exams were timed, questions were automatically put in varying orders, and values for mathematical problems were changed to inhibit cheating or plagiarism. HCC did much the same for its courses that provided on-line testing. What differed was that HCC did not offer online testing for all its distance learning courses. This also applied to the courses offered within the International Business curriculum. Online testing was provided in some, but for others, on-site, paper-based testing was required.

Although HCC had a process in place to administer paper-based exams in remote locations, it was anticipated that there may be additional difficulties encountered when trying to administer these exams at a remote site in another country. TecMilenio representatives to the Administrative Development Team felt strongly that online testing should be required in all courses offered. HCC representatives agreed. Therefore, to ensure testing consistency in all courses and to avoid potential difficulties with administering paper-based tests in a foreign country, it was decided in the implementation step that all courses offered from HCC to TecMilenio students would be required to offer online testing services. As the initial course offering, BUSG 1301 – Introduction to Business, was revised accordingly.

Student Services

Table 21

Student Services Matrix

Plan:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a standardized business process to follow for student service-related activities. • Create a standardized enrollment process for student services to follow. • Arrange for transfer of academic credit. • Prepare for transcribing services. • Compare courses from each institution for equivalency. • Comparison of distance education student orientation materials from each institution. • Ensure that bilingual student services and counseling were available. • Plan for online disability accommodations for TecMilenio students.
Implement:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement draft business process with initial students. • Implement draft enrollment process with initial students. • Implement course grading process for both institutions. • Implement transcribing process for both institutions.

Student Services Matrix continued

Observe:	• Observe results/processes of first student enrollment.
Reflect:	

The complex and comprehensive issue of student services was one of the most prominent areas of concern and discussion in the development of the partnership. As it is in all college environments, student services matters were multifaceted. Critically important issues emerged in the areas of registration deadlines and processes, transfer of credit, transcripting, development of standardized business processes and responsibilities while working both with students and college departments, student screening for eligibility, course equivalency, disability issues, and more.

Standardized Enrollment and Business Processes. As a result of the planning step, a step-by-step template of standardized student enrollment processes for HCC was developed. It was then initially implemented and evaluated while enrolling the first students registering in the initial course offering. A copy of that template is included as Appendix D. It included a variety of critical issues that required attention to ensure that appropriate steps were taken for students registering in the program. Generally, it included a list of issues, actions necessary to address them, and a set of comments and remaining questions regarding the establishment of enrollment and other student services processes. It will need to be continually revised as the international partnership matures.

A draft of a standardized template for the establishment of student services business processes was also developed. This template outlined processes and procedures that were particular to established practices of HCC in consultation with TecMilenio. As

with the enrollment template described above, this business processes draft will need to be continually revised as the partnership matures. A copy of this template is included as Appendix E.

Transcription Services. Transcription of classes was also discussed in the planning step. At both institutions, classes will be transcribed at the institution registering the students. That is, HCC students enrolling in a class that will be taught through TecMilenio will register and pay for the class at HCC and the class will reflect on his/her HCC transcript. On the other hand, TecMilenio students enrolling in a class that will be taught through HCC will register and pay for the class at TecMilenio and the class will be reflected on his/her TecMilenio transcript.

Online Orientations. Of key importance in the establishment of any online program, and for this international program in particular, are the online orientation materials made available to the students. This was discussed extensively in the planning step. Both partner institutions compared both the presence and quality of comprehensive online orientation materials and it was found that both had excellent resources available. Any institution, and particularly a community college, cannot provide enough online orientation materials to students. Not only should orientation be mandatory for all first-time, on-campus students, but it is equally if not more important for online students because of the physical detachment and time differences inherent in the asynchronous online experience. Research by Forrester, Motteram, Parkinson, & Slaouti (2005) clearly indicated that orientations for distance learning students should “support the transition to distance learning by equipping students with the requisite knowledge, skills and attitudes

to become effective distance learners” (p. 293). This helps ease potential problems with online study and allows students to develop a connection with their online course and instructor as well as establish an early sense of interactivity.

An overview of current orientation materials provided to online students from both institutions was discussed and is represented in Table 22.

Table 22

Online Orientation Materials Provided at HCC and TecMilenio

<u>HCC</u>	<u>TecMilenio</u>
<p>Successful Online Students (SOS) course:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Free to any visitor, no HCC registration required. • In a distance learning course format, course content introduces potential online learner to WebCT and how the DE Department operates at HCC. <p>Mandatory comprehensive online orientations for all online classes.</p>	<p>Mandatory online induction/orientation course:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Available to TM students prior to each trimester. • Available only to registered students.

Financial Aid Considerations. Early in the planning discussions, concerns arose involving the ability of HCC students to receive financial aid for courses taken from an international college or university. However, since all HCC students taking courses from TecMilenio remained registered at HCC, current financial aid packages still applied.

The issue of financial aid for TecMilenio students taking courses from HCC was also reviewed. It was revealed that there was very little financial aid available to these students. There were only some existing tuition discounts based on current student employment. Therefore, the TecMilenio student’s ability to enroll and pay HCC tuition

was discussed. However, it was communicated earlier in this chapter that TecMilenio tuition was higher than HCC's. As a result, this concern was not anticipated to be as much of a financial hardship for students from TecMilenio as originally expected.

Bilingual Student Services. Bilingual student services, and more specifically, counseling, were also identified early in the planning phase as a critically important issue. Both institutions provided counseling and other student services in both English and Spanish. Similar to what was described in the Technical Support section of this chapter, it was broadly discussed and agreed upon that students required these services in their native language, especially when requesting assistance with an asynchronous and sometimes isolated service like distance learning.

Disability Accommodations. Disability issues were discussed but did not progress beyond the planning step. When asked about disability accommodations that were provided in TecMilenio courses offered to HCC students, the TecMilenio liaison was not aware of any special considerations specifically built into their course management system. Unlike HCC, there were also no specialized testing accommodations or disability support service counselor at TecMilenio who arranged for special accommodations.

At HCC, its course management system (WebCT) provided limited accommodations for all distance education students including those that were visually and hearing impaired. Those same services were planned to be made available to TecMilenio students enrolled in HCC online classes.

Summary

In this chapter, the primary administrative issues involved in the development of this partnership were identified. Certainly, they were specific to this joint venture and results will undoubtedly differ in other settings.

Overall, the findings of the study were broad and varied. That is, they represented and encompassed a wide variety of areas of the college ranging from mission to language considerations, from finances to marketing, from programmatic concerns to calendars. It was apparent that nearly all entered the action research cycle at the planning stage but few actually completed a full cycle. This was attributable to the fact that this study confined itself to the establishment of the program and concluded with the enrollment of the first students in the first class. There were many more data to be gathered and studied regarding operation and maintenance. This certainly opens the door for a multitude of future studies on each finding discussed both in this chapter and the literature review. Along with many other implications and issues, the opportunity for future studies is one of the primary recommendations made in the following chapter, Analysis and Interpretation.

CHAPTER 5

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATIONS

Introduction

The Paradox of Action Research. Even as a first-time doctoral researcher using action research, it immediately became apparent that this methodology was both flexible and subjective. As discussed in Chapter 3, these are great strengths. Action research “requires the active involvement of all the stakeholders in the entire research-extension-development process and the acknowledgment of their multiple realities” (Okali et al. 1994, Cornwall & Jewkes 1995, as cited in Lal, Lim-Applegate, and Scoccimarro, 2001). Therefore, it takes into account the biases and administrative preconceptions of both participating institutions and the participants themselves. Also, as explained in Chapter 3, professional life often takes turns we cannot anticipate. Decisions made by the administrative team are not predictable nor do they always follow strictly prescribed paths that are clearly distinguishable. People are people. So essentially, the author found that one of the great strengths of action research is that it accounts for these irregularities.

But paradoxically, because of these qualities, it is also this author’s observation that these qualities of action research are weaknesses. Because of its flexibility, it does not always follow the more established, and many times more secure track that more traditional quantitative and qualitative methodologies take. That is, more strictly controlling the collection and examination of data. For a first time author of a doctoral treatise, this causes a sense of uncertainty. A variety of results and findings could emerge

based on institutional customs or participant bias. Yet, as was discussed in Chapter 3 in regard to the validity concept of transferability, the goal of the study is not to establish generalized, universally-valid, absolute truths. Rather, it is that others who review this study can confidently make decisions in their own environments based on these findings. Regardless, this sense of uncertainty can still exist.

Despite the above-mentioned strength and weakness, the author found the overall process to be rewarding and productive. The findings will be extremely valuable as Houston Community College and many other post-secondary institutions pursue relationships of this type.

Quality Control: An underlying theme not specifically identified, but continually present nonetheless, was quality control. Discussed near the beginning of the study as a priority by the Administrative Development Team, it permeated all aspects of the project. Although it wasn't identified as a specific finding in any of the action research cycles or steps, this author cannot overemphasize its importance.

As was mentioned in the literature review, a significant component of quality control related to ensuring consistency between both institutions. Consistency with mission, technology, financial practices, calendars, grade reporting, and many other areas lead to success. The result of these quality practices will be determined in the future with the continuation and overall success of the program as it matures.

Applicability of Findings to Four-Year Institutions. There is a reason this author mentions value for other post-secondary institutions, and not specifically community colleges. That is because, despite the fact that this study was conducted from

within the community college environment and intended to identify issues specific to those institutions, the author suspects that the findings would be similar for four-year schools. For the most part, key administrative issues such as mission, administrative team processes, language proficiency, calendar and scheduling issues, marketing/advertising, finance, and others all pertain to both community colleges and their four-year or research counterparts.

Perhaps one of the few and principal distinguishing differences in this study between community and four-year colleges pertained to the choice of curriculum. Both TecMilenio and HCC (being a community college) have strong workforce degree and certificate programs. In fact, this was one of the primary reasons for originally exploring the partnership. Both institutions emphasized offering customized programs specifically designed to immediately place graduates into their local workforce and economy. This is not always a direct or an immediate goal for four-year or research institutions.

Applicability of Action Research to Committees and Task Forces. It is also this author's observation and recommendation that many colleges and universities regularly use the steps involved in action research as a customary part of their decision making process. The basic action research phases of planning, implementing, observing, and reflecting used in this study simply make common sense in a problem-solving environment. These are often the steps used in college-based committees and task forces given the charge to create or improve a specific function or process. Unfortunately, it is this author's experience that these groups or committees often don't recognize that the application of action research steps fit into a logical sequence that have a variety of

commonsense benefits. Among many, the most prominent observed in this study was that it builds collaboration and allows team members gain a better understanding of their specific practice. The application and implementation of the action research methodology steps can improve these, and many other, processes immensely. This author will implement it in future committee participation.

Implications for Future Research. It was also pointed out in Chapter 3 that the gathering of new data will continue to occur throughout the life of this partnership. Assuming the venture thrives in the long term, both HCC and TecMilenio will continue to collect and implement useful data supporting the success of the program. However, as the title of the study indicates, it was limited to the creation of the program, not the maintenance or continuance of it. Therefore, the collection of field data concluded with the enrollment of a small selected number of students.

As a result, each administrative issue brought to light in either the literature review or findings is, in itself, a topic for further examination and research. This study simply identified many of the primary issues in the establishment of this international partnership. Social and educational internationalization and globalization are growing larger and larger within the context of post-secondary online course and program delivery. Thus, each of these issues merits further, and more detailed, examination. The author invites the initiation of future action research studies to examine the implications of the continued operation and maintenance of international online partnerships such as the one investigated here.

As pointed out previously in this study, the preponderance of research in this field appeared to be in online curriculum development, not in the area of distance learning administration. Generally, the majority of studies addressed the issue of effective and successful design and delivery of online courses for international students. It is this author's hope that future studies and projects specifically address the administrative issues. The future success of students, faculty, and other administrators in the field warrant it.

Limited Usefulness of Questionnaire. In the Methodology chapter, distribution of a questionnaire was originally planned as an additional data gathering method. It was intended to be distributed to administrators, faculty, and staff who had participated in activities related to the establishment of this international program. More specifically, it was intended to evaluate, by order of importance and significance to the success of the online program, the issues that emerged in both the action research study and the literature review.

Meta-analysis of Cycles and Steps. As the study progressed, the value of these participants rating the importance of administrative issues became less critical. Because of the action research methodology used, the relative significance or magnitude of the issues that emerged already appeared evident. They were all important. Therefore, rather than administer the questionnaire and gather additional data that would not add substantive overall value to the study, the author concluded instead to create a table-based meta-analysis of the cycles and action research steps that appeared in the matrices in Chapter 4. This table would not demonstrate levels of importance, but rather frequency

and prevalence of activities categorized by steps in the action research cycles.

Essentially, the table combined the results of all cycles to indicate where primary activities and efforts took place. As a result, future practitioners may be able to anticipate where their efforts might be focused when undertaking a project or partnership of this sort. This analysis is presented in Table 23.

Table 23

Overview of Action Research Findings and Steps

Issue	Planning	Implementation	Observation	Evaluation
Mission	Discuss viability and applicability		Compare mission statements	Strong commonalities in strategic direction
Establishment of Academic Development Team	Discuss need for team	Assign team members to project	Observe performance and proficiency of each member	
	Identify potential team members	Identify primary project liaison		
Language Proficiency	Discuss bilingual student populations	HCC courses: English TM courses: Spanish	Minimum TOEFL scores for TM may limit enrollment	
	Discuss course language	Establish minimum TOEFL scores		
	Discuss minimum language standards	Establish minimum Spanish proficiency scores		
Program Selection	Review current online courses and programs	Ensure availability of online courses	Review appropriateness of initial course offerings	Decision not to offer full pilot course
	Choose International Business curriculum	Choose initial HCC course offering		
		Choose initial TM course offering		
	Pre-evaluation of initial course			
	Develop additional required courses			

Overview of Action Research Findings, continued

Issue	Planning	Implementation	Observation	Evaluation
Financial Considerations	Discuss tuition rates at both colleges	90%/10% division of tuition revenues		
	Total agreed tuition - \$286	Set up institutional revenue and expense accounts		
	Financial aid/scholarships	Schedule for transfer of funds		
	Discuss transfer of funds			
Marketing	Discuss marketing plans, costs, revenue opportunities	Create recruitment and marketing screening tool	Insufficient prep time for full pilot course	Revise enrollment. Reduce scope of marketing
	Plan initial marketing strategies			
Academic Calendars	Compare academic calendars	Revise course schedules (if necessary)	Observe course duration acceptability	Evaluate and make future projections for course length
Technical Support	Plan technical support for both course platforms	Ensure availability of bilingual technical support	Review WebTec	
			Observe quality of bilingual services	
Accreditation	Review current accreditation status of both institutions	Arrange for registration and course equiv. measures		
Accountability/ Institutional Effectiveness	Review importance of accountability measure			
	Determine areas of data collection & evaluation			
	Discuss state reporting of classes			
Faculty Training	Review faculty training requirements	Ensure sufficient faculty training & experience		
Grade Reporting	Review grading systems from both colleges	Ensure grades are consistent with partner college		
Testing/ Administration of Examinations	Review administration of DE testing at both colleges	Implement similar testing within all courses offered		
		Revise BUSG 1301 to provide online testing only		

Overview of Action Research Findings, continued

Issue	Planning	Implementation	Observation	Evaluation
Student Services	Create standardized business processes for student services	Implement draft business process with initial students	Observe results/ processes of first student enrollment	
	Create standardized student services enrollment process	Implement draft enrollment process with initial students		
	Arrange for transfer of academic credit	Implement course grading process for both institutions		
	Prepare for transcribing services	Implement transcribing process for both institutions		
	Compare courses for equivalency			
	Compare DE orientation materials			
	Ensure availability of bilingual services			
	Plan for online disability accommodations			

From the previous table, it is apparent that the preponderance of activities that occurred in this study was in the planning and implementation steps. Again, this result is reasonable and expectable, since the study confined itself to the creation and initial establishment of this international online partnership and not the continued operation of it. If the study centered on follow up operation and maintenance, this author anticipates that much more activity would have centered on observation and evaluation.

Student services contained the highest number of steps or activities. Without it, many of the other issues would be compromised or impossible. Marketing and eventual student enrollment were just two examples of this.

Comparison of Literature Review to Findings. Finally, before discussing the implications and analysis of each of the findings individually, it is also important to point

out how strikingly similar the issues reviewed in the literature were to the findings of this study. Most of the rationales for involvement and the keys to success documented by other authors in Chapter 2 arose in this action research investigation. The concept of mission was perhaps the most pivotal, as will be discussed later, but other commonalities in both the literature and findings included development and utilization of an administrative team, a multitude of student service issues, language proficiency, tuition concerns, technology issues, accreditation, accountability, and more. This author believes these similarities help affirm the findings of this study and provide additional confirmability as described in the Validity section of Chapter 3.

One somewhat distinctive aspect of this study, in comparison with other programs, is that it examined an international distance learning *partnership* between two schools. Discussions in the literature more frequently centered on one institution originating an online program to students. It made appropriate preparations and accommodations for offering the program from both administrative and curricular standpoints and then reported on it. International students either from specially targeted geographic regions or occupational groups, or from unspecified locations, enrolled in that program.

With the partnership in this study, two colleges were equally involved. For example, both colleges offered workforce programs to each other, both offered their students the opportunity to take courses from the partner institution, both encountered significant language issues, both discussed and implemented marketing plans, and much

more. In other words, the colleges were equal *partners* – a much less frequent international scenario compared to institutions studied in the literature.

This final chapter will present the various administrative issues that emerged in the same order as in Chapter 4. However, it will present perspectives on analysis and interpretation of the findings.

Mission

The Importance of Mission as a Gatekeeper. Beyond all administrative issues that emerged in this study, mission could be labeled the “gatekeeper.” Gatekeepers allow or restrict access and monitor the actions of others. They are responsible for passage to another area, for access to a new field. Mission was the initial gatekeeper for determining the success of the proposed partnership. Without a comparison and consensus of mission between both institutions, and the appropriate strategies that support each, the partnership would have not proceeded beyond initial discussions. For institutions and/or individuals considering similar partnerships in the future, explore mission first. All else follows.

The study of mission, unlike the other administrative issues that were identified, began not in the planning stage but in the observation stage. Being the first issue examined, it was unusual for this author to begin the initial action research cycle of the study with what was normally the third step. However, it is presumed that each institution in this online partnership, and all others that may follow in the future, will already have a set of strategic plans and goals. Therefore, the mission cycle quite

naturally would begin with observation of each potential partner's mission and overall strategic direction, not with mission planning.

Establishment of an Administrative Development Team

Assignment of Responsibility and Commitment. In this area, it is key to make clear assignments of responsibility. As was evident from the findings, there were a myriad of details related to the creation and development of this program. Each, in its own rite, is essential. Ensuring that there was an assignment of responsibility for each of these issues, or categories of issues, was integral to success.

In a related point, it was also imperative that all members of the team were both committed to the project and results driven. As the study evolved, it became increasingly evident that action research, and the overall goal of establishing the online program, was a collaborative work. All members of the team were on equal footing. "In action research, all actors involved in the research process are equal participants, and must be involved in every stage of the research . . . The kind of involvement required is collaborative involvement" (Grundy & Kemmis, 1988, as cited in Zuber-Skerritt, 1996). Everyone on the team was required to "pull their weight" and sometimes, even more. Without it, success would have been compromised or threatened.

Ensure Comprehensive Representation. Finally, equally important as making clear assignments of responsibility, it was essential to ensure that there was a cross-section of representation on this committee. The Administrative Development Team represented college development as well as executive, student services, and academic

administrators. Other key contributors included faculty, department chairs, a registrar, budgetary/financial specialists and more. As other issues in this project continue to arise and develop in the future, additional areas of emphasis will require representation. It is also important for all members of the team to continually remain sensitive to what areas, at each college, require representation and to make revisions or additions accordingly.

Language and Language Proficiency

Course Translation. Regarding language, there was limited discussion regarding the conversion of some HCC courses to Spanish and some TM courses to English. This was not pursued because of translation costs and accuracy. However, this is a future consideration for the Administrative Development Team.

Minimum Levels of Proficiency. Since ensuring programmatic and eventually, student success were two of the key goals of this proposed partnership, the Administrative Development Team also felt that one way to inhibit or reduce that desired outcome was to overwhelm students with more advanced language requirements than they were prepared to deal with. For that reason, minimum language proficiency standards were set. As the program matures into full operation, language skills, and the institutional language proficiency standards will be tested and should be reassessed.

For many reasons, it's already quite difficult for a community college student to succeed. Specifically in regard to this online program, these further potential complexities must also be considered:

- Problems inherent to taking an online course including the demand for more individualized learning, maturity, personal motivation, and others.
- Issues involved in taking an online course from a school other than one's own.
- Issues involved in taking that course from a school in another country.

Together with the Administrative Development Team, this author believed that significant reductions in student success would result if additional layers of complexity or demands involving language proficiency were added.

Program Selection

Value of Program Selection. Although curriculum development per se was not the focus of this study, careful selection of the overall academic program was vital.

Because this project was a partnership between two institutions where students would enroll in courses offered by the partner institution, it was important to select a program that both colleges offered. As a result, potential courses for students to enroll in were more available. Also, those courses provided by partner institutions would potentially be of more value to students progressing toward completion of their degree requirements.

Initial Enrollment Limitations. In regard to initial course enrollment, caution should be exercised. The entire Administrative Development Team felt that administrators should not be too impatient with initiating the program and moving too quickly toward enrolling the first students in the first course. In any international online offering, there are many details to be considered beyond offering the program to domestic students. The overall number and diversity of findings of the study support that

conclusion. However, in a partnership of this type, where two colleges are offering an exchange of programs and courses, practically all issues and details must be doubled. Each institution must implement these administrative modifications at their own site as well as ensure that they are being developed and put into place at the partner site as well.

The original goal for first student enrollment was to register a cohort of approximately 15 to 20 students in the partner college's class. The Administrative Development Team soon found that this was premature and, perhaps, too aggressive a goal. As reported in the Findings chapter, the team decided instead to reduce the number of enrollees to three to five carefully selected students who would be offered full tuition scholarships in exchange for their evaluative comments and assessment at the end of the semester. At that time, enrollment growth would be either considered or expected.

Financial Considerations

Revenue Generation. Despite the issue brought to light in Chapter 2, Literature Review, neither institution was involved in this project for purely altruistic reasons. Although both colleges were certainly concerned for the benefit or welfare of their students and respective communities, both colleges expressed other priorities. The primary one was the creation of additional revenue. Both colleges emphasized increasing enrollment and revenue as a targeted benefit of implementing the program. This was made clear from both upper levels of the college administrations and the Administrative Development Team. Although both institutions had other compelling and

complementary educational and altruistic motivations for developing this program, concern for the “bottom line” was certainly of equal, if not greater, importance.

As of this writing, there remain concerns regarding enrollment and revenue growth. As students from each institution sign up for the partner institution’s courses, this certainly adds enrollment and revenue for that partner. However, it also simultaneously reduces potential enrollment from the home college of the student since that individual is now taking the course from the partner institution instead of their own. In effect, what may result is essentially a one-for-one swap of students, which would not build considerable additional revenue for either school. Conversely, if enrollment becomes too weighted toward one school, the other may have growing concerns over revenue loss, which may eventually jeopardize the overall partnership.

Once again, this brings the relative importance of revenue generation to the forefront as an issue. As the program evolves, it should be evaluated for reasons in addition to making money. They include internationalization of the curriculum, exposure to international student experiences, globalization of workforce, etc. However, in the future a key question is will they outweigh primary emphasis on “the bottom line?”

Establishing a Fair Tuition. It was also clear from the findings on tuition rates that, in a partnership such as this one, one institution cannot have a price advantage over another. This would clearly create an unequal “playing field” and cause larger numbers of students to prefer and enroll in one institution over another. Cost is a great motivator for students, and it must be carefully considered in this international partnership environment.

Both a reasonable and equitable tuition rate had to be determined. In many international programs, because of the exchange rate of U.S. currency, educational costs and especially tuition, are often too expensive and simply out of reach for foreign students. In this case, TecMilenio, being a private institution typically assessing higher tuition rates than state-funded schools, charged rates even higher than HCC's. It was both unusual and unexpected that the community college was required to raise its tuition to match that of its international partner.

Impact of Currency Exchange Rates on Foreign Students. It is this author's and other's experience that when working with international programs, tuition invariably becomes a critical and decisive issue in regard to a student's ability to enroll and resulting program popularity. Currency exchange rates in many foreign countries create a situation where, in many cases, foreign students cannot afford an American college education – even an American community college education where tuition and fees are typically less than nearly all 4-year public and private colleges and universities. Tuition cost, and its impact on foreign students, must always be taken into consideration early in the establishment of these programs.

Uncharacteristically, this was not an issue in this partnership. As outlined in Chapter 4, Findings, TecMilenio's per course tuition was considerably higher than HCC's. Interestingly, in this case the community college was required to increase rates to match those of the foreign institution.

Marketing

Caution with Publicity of Program. Administrators should take into account a certain degree of confidentiality when planning these new programs. If this program is publicized, or simply if “word gets out” about it, it can build unnecessary student anticipation or excitement about the new program prior to its actual establishment.

To illustrate this point, one of the counseling members of the Administrative Development Team received multiple telephone calls from students prior to its being established, announced, or marketed. Somehow, students heard of the program and, thinking that it already existed, were inquiring about enrollment and participation. They were disappointed to learn that not only was the program not yet in place, but also that initial student registration would be extremely limited due to reasons articulated earlier in this chapter and in Chapter 4.

Consideration of Future Marketing Costs. Although the study ended with enrollment of the first students, all members of the Administrative Development Team must consider future marketing costs. It was the team’s belief that marketing costs would begin to escalate considerably after initial enrollment. Certainly, as the project matures and develops momentum, marketing costs will also grow and need to be examined more closely. It is also wise to consider these potential further expenses well in advance of initial enrollment and to specify and communicate those costs to budget authorities and other high-level administrators.

Phasing of Marketing Strategies. Finally, administrators should be wary of being too ambitious in initial marketing attempts. Allow time for the program to develop

and mature, especially in the pilot phase. It was virtually impossible to implement all marketing strategies as discussed between the two institutions during the implementation steps in the cycle. To do so would have been both unrealistic and unnecessary in terms of both recruitment and potential costs. Rather, as the program develops, continually communicate on marketing needs both within and outside the Administrative Development Team to assure that marketing and advertising strategies are implemented at the proper and most effective times.

Academic Calendars

Flexibility with Calendar Coordination. Many academic institutions follow very similar academic calendars. But as was explained in Chapter 4, it was revealed that although TecMilenio followed what they labeled a trimester calendar, it was essentially the same as what HCC considered a semester system. What differed considerably was the length of each class within that trimester/semester. TecMilenio offered more modular 5-week sessions whereas HCC offered the more traditional 16-week semester long classes.

Overall, it is imperative that partnering institutions demonstrate flexibility in scheduling and duration of academic online classes. To not implement that flexibility limits the number of courses students can enroll in, their participation in the program, and ultimately, the overall level of globalization and interaction students can experience. Offering alternate length classes also benefits students from within the host institution's home state or country.

Technical Support

Accessibility of Course Management System. Although it was anticipated from findings in the literature review, no significant technical problems or difficulties arose in that action research cycle. As mentioned in Chapter 4, HCC uses WebCT as its online course management system. TecMilenio uses several systems, including WebCT, but relies primarily on WebTec, a “home-grown” and comprehensive course management software developed at their Universidad Virtual. All applications were easily accessible by students and had been fully field tested.

Need for Server Downtime. From a technical standpoint, both institutions expressed the need and agreed to have “downtime” for their distance education course servers between terms. In the case of this online project, downtime essentially refers to a limited period of time, after the completion of a semester, when course servers and courses are not available to students. During this period, appropriate technical maintenance is performed, all students and course “shells” or files are removed, appropriate software updates are carried out, and other necessary repairs are completed. The downtime anticipated and planned for by both institutions was a practice that each normally carried out prior to this proposed partnership. It was also realistic and reasonable within the context of this project.

Bilingual Technical Support. Just by their nature, online programs not only inherently create a distance between student and instructor, they also create a potential dissociation between students and any other types of assistance they require – including technical support. It should be highly emphasized that, despite the required bilingual

skills of all students in the program, technical and other types of student support must be provided bilingually for the student to remain technically, as well as academically, connected.

Evaluation of Partner's Course Management Software. Finally, this author also recommends thoroughly examining all features of the partnering institution's course management system, especially if it is different from one's own. More specifically, ensure that as many compatibility issues (between students and server/software) are considered. For example, commercially available course management systems, such as WebCT, provide extremely helpful web browser tune-up services and software. Browser tune-ups automatically check whether the web browsers students are using are valid and maximized for use with the course management software. TecMilenio's WebTec did provide that service as well.

Accreditation

The Value of an Accredited Partner. It was apparent that, if TecMilenio had previously possessed regional accreditation, as did their parent university Monterrey Tec, the examination and process of credit transfers would have been considerably less involved. This author has not researched commonality, frequency, or types of accreditation amongst foreign colleges. However, in a partnership arrangement with that type of institution, it may be, in fact, more likely that a lack of accreditation would be the more common or expected scenario. As a result, future administrators and practitioners should anticipate working with foreign colleges without accreditation and expect to make

new, individualized, or innovative arrangements for transfer of credit. Likewise, the issue and process of state reporting of classes requires understanding and flexibility. All must be performed within ethical and appropriate parameters.

Accountability/Institutional Effectiveness

Accountability at TecMilenio. Accountability and institutional effectiveness issues should be strongly considered in a partnership with any institution. However, it was discovered through conversations with TecMilenio administrators that, at that school compared to HCC, there was considerably less emphasis on accountability and the collection of institutional effectiveness data. In the U.S. educational environment, and particularly in the public sector, community colleges are growingly embracing and depending on a culture of evidence that supports an accurate gathering, evaluation, and reinvestment of data outcomes (McClenney, 2004). Although the collection of those data for HCC is vital, the one truly vital statistic consistently emphasized by TecMilenio was enrollment and its resulting revenue. Perhaps other accountability measures were not emphasized because of lesser governmental and constituent demands in Mexico or the state of Nuevo Leon respectively, but also because of its status as a private school. This situation should be anticipated by future researchers and practitioners.

Faculty Training

Updating Faculty Training Materials. An area of emphasis concerning faculty training, and especially in regard to international distance learning, is to ensure that

training modules are up to date in regard to current technology and pedagogy. It would also be ideal if the majority of the training activities were available on line and possibly even in multiple languages. But that is perhaps more of a wish than a reality considering human and financial resource limitations, particularly in the community college environment. However, online training modules would make it easier for administrators and faculty to review and update materials as necessary.

Regardless, in an international online environment, separation of student and faculty can be even more acute compared to the more “traditional” distance learning settings. In this environment, physical distance, language, culture, and other conditions can play a more influential role in separating students from instructors and students from their fellow students. Considering this, it is even more important for faculty training opportunities to be pedagogically and technologically customized and updated.

Grade Reporting

Importance of Instructor of Record. Since one of the key goals of this online partnership, and the economic development project in general, was international exposure leading toward student success, it is critical that an instructor of record from the host institution be assigned to each class in this partnership to tend to the needs of their students. This was reported in the findings. It is equally as critical that the task of appropriately reporting grades be assigned to that instructor. In this study, there were dissimilarities in how each college awarded student grades. Therefore, coordination was required to appropriately report them to the partner institution.

That same instructor of record should be ultimately responsible as a course manager and mentor, frequently communicating with both students and other faculty despite the fact that the course may be taught by an instructor from the partner institution.

Testing/Administration of Examinations

Consistency of Testing Modes. As has been previously stated, this study did not center on the development of curriculum or teaching online classes to international students. However, the issue of testing, usually an activity more frequently identified with the teaching of classes, clearly emerged as an administrative issue.

One of the key administrative findings in regard to testing was to ensure that it was included and managed in a consistent manner for all classes offered from both institutions. To do this, and on the insistence of TecMilenio, HCC revised its BUSG 1301 – Introduction to Business class from paper-based on-site testing to online examinations. Not only did this achieve testing consistency for the initial course offerings, it also provided a professional development opportunity for the instructor of that course. As a result of this requirement, the instructor's acumen in the development and implementation of online examinations improved considerably.

Perhaps one of the underlying messages to future administrators involved in projects of this type is to embrace the best of the technology, but do so with caution as explained in the following paragraph. Online testing continues to be a growing trend and increasing expectation on the part of students. There are a growing number of distance

learners that will not even consider an online course that requires paper-based on-site exams.

Appropriate Use of Technology. An overall statement of caution about technology, however, is that it should not be embraced because it simply exists or is available. When used appropriately, technology effectively provides accessible content and facilitates seamless interaction between instructor and student as well as student to student. New technologies should be applied in one's online course because it provides a substantive benefit to that course, student, faculty, or institution. Administrators should not support the implementation of a new technology within a virtual classroom simply because it exists, has promise, or is the next technology craze. At best that could be inappropriate or distracting. Potentially worse, it could be damaging and/or disastrous for students and faculty alike. As Palloff & Pratt (2000) wrote, "technology does not teach students; effective teachers do" (p. 4). Technologies such as online testing should be used because they improve or enhance learning or provide some increased benefit to students, faculty, and/or institutions that were not previously achieved.

Student Services

As was reported in Chapter 4, student services proved to be both a comprehensive and multifaceted administrative issue. It was one of the most prominent issues of discussion and coordination in the development of the joint venture.

Need for Bilingual Student Services. Much like the need for bilingual technical support, it immediately became apparent that whatever student services issues needed to

be addressed, it was necessary to provide them bilingually. Despite that fact that students may demonstrate fluency when speaking English as a second language, communication skills may not be as proficient as when conversing in their native language. In fact, many may still have a level of second language proficiency that nevertheless hinders overall communication. When preparing for online classes, which in many cases are more complicated because of the introduction of space and time differences together with increased computer interaction, many students feel considerably more comfortable making these course preparations in their native language. This appears to be true even though they have satisfied the requirements of a language proficiency examination.

Transfer of Credit. Because of this study concluding with first student enrollment, the issue of credit transfer did not advance beyond the planning and implementation steps. Therefore, no observation or reflection occurred. However, this is an issue that requires careful monitoring and supervision as this or any similar project matures.

Applicability of Federal Financial Aid. In a related area, another notable area of future concern would be for those students receiving financial aid. If there are students in this program that receive federal financial aid for their education, then it may be questionable whether that funding could be applied toward TecMilenio or another unaccredited, foreign institution. Administrators should research and be aware of the United States Department of Education regulations to determine if the implications of students enrolling in unaccredited foreign institutions.

Disability Issues. Disability accommodations are an issue of great concern for distance learners. HCC provided accommodations inherent within its WebCT course management software as well as specialized testing accommodations and other specialized disability counseling services. TecMilenio's services were considerably more limited. It is imperative, regardless of what services the foreign partner institution offers, that the community college make every effort to provide disability accommodations for all students on both sides of the international border. It is also important that the community college investigate the disability services provided by the foreign institution and that it be made aware of the spectrum of services available to students at the community college. This must be extensively discussed and supported when entering a venture of this sort.

State Requirements for Course Equivalency. In regard to equivalency between courses taken from partner institutions, courses in academic degree programs are evaluated differently than those in workforce tracks. In HCC's case, state core curriculum requirements mandate what must be taught in academic courses. However, there appears to be more flexibility and creativity in regard to workforce courses. In that light, choosing a workforce degree program such as International Business and the initial workforce course offering of Introduction to Business was a benefit to this particular project. State requirements for course equivalency should be considered when selecting programs and individual course to offer in these partnerships.

It is also critically important for the local teaching faculty and department chair (in this case, at HCC) to have immediate access to review all courses from the partner

institution for equivalency. This point is highly emphasized because HCC was the institution of record for the courses taken by its students. The community college faculty and department chairs must ensure equivalency and quality and continually collaborate on these issues. To continually monitor equivalency, faculty of record must maintain contact with the students from within the online course.

Value of Online Orientations. Accessibility and similarity in regard to distance learning orientation materials is also of utmost importance. It is this author's experience, that in an online environment, students should begin their coursework with both a well informed and helpful online orientation. It has a significant impact on course retention and future student success.

Orientation materials should not only include information on navigating the course management software. They should also include a thorough and easily accessible outline on the course itself (syllabus) as well as information on the spectrum of services available for online learners at the host institution and how to access them. A minimum amount of student data should also be collected. Information on the type of computer, browser, and version of the browser should be gathered and saved in a database for the semester. A current email address should also be required. Finally, whether the student is a first-time distance learner should also be assessed so that additional follow up information and assistance can be provided. All materials should be collected and offered in a user-friendly, well-organized environment. It is strongly recommended that student participation in and completion of online orientations should be required for each course taken.

Finally, orientation materials should be made available not only for the students enrolled in the class. It is recommended that they also be available for prospective students, faculty other than the course instructor, and administrators involved in the project. In the long run, this will benefit overall success of the student experience.

Documentation and Standardization of Enrollment/Business Practices. Much like the point made in the section on the Academic Development Team in this chapter, it is critical to make clear assignments of responsibility as well as plainly outline and document business processes. It appeared in this study that there were seemingly countless business-related details. Each can be vital for institutional records, accountability, and student success. Ensure that they are clearly documented, consistent, and updated whenever necessary.

The same is true of enrollment processes. Establishing understandable and achievable enrollment processes will contribute toward clarification, buy in, and overall success from all constituents. Again, they must be updated as the program evolves and/or when institutional processes require revision. Documents outlining business and enrollment processes developed as a result of this study are included in the Appendices D and E. The remainder of additional significant documents drafted to establish or clarify processes, emails, and records of meetings are included in Appendix F.

Summary

In this chapter, analyses, interpretations, and impressions of each of the primary findings of the study were offered. Certainly, many more could be drawn in such an open-ended study.

In regard to the action research process, it was clearly noticeable that the preponderance of activities involved in the creation of this online program occurred in the planning and implementation steps compared to observation and reflection. It also became apparent that the overall findings, that is, those primary issues that emerged as a result of the project and the methodology applied to it, were in large part non-specific to community colleges. They could be readily applicable to four-year institutions as well.

This author looks forward to continuing and growing this online partnership in the coming semesters and academic years. There is clearly an expanding future and increasing opportunities for the delivery of international online education. As technology continues to make our world smaller and more accessible, it is to our collective advantage as educational administrators to consider technology-based education opportunities, and distance learning in particular, as viable options for effective course delivery to international students and partnerships with their respective institutions.

APPENDIX A

Introductory Administrative Issues

Issues for Discussion/Development – 4/17-18/06

<u>Issue</u>	<u>HCC Status</u>	<u>TecMilenio Status</u>	<u>Proposed Date</u>
1. All courses for degree available online.	15 of 20 courses currently online in HCC International Business degree program.		Ongoing.
2. Determine uniform grading system.			May 1
3. Financial aid issues related to taking courses in another country.	Financial aid may be available for HCC students taking courses from T.M. HCC cannot offer financial aid to T.M. students.		May 15
4. Marketing issues: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How/where to market – Internet, print, other media. • When to market programs. 	Potential strategies include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DE home page • Distance Education course brochure • Egalitarian – HCC student newspaper • Northeast College (HCC) Business Dept. • Business instructors can market pgm. • HCC recruiters • HCC student organizations (e.g., international student orgs.) • Notification to Student Svc. and Academic Deans. 		May 15

	<u>Issue</u>	<u>HCC Status</u>	<u>TecMilenio Status</u>	<u>Proposed Date</u>
5.	Discus tuition agreements, percentages, and how transfer of funds will be completed.	Agree on total tuition.	Same as HCC	May 15
6.	Provide technical support.	Bilingual technical support is currently available.	Same at TecMilenio?	Completed?
7.	Provide counseling and student services.	Bilingual currently available. Define & discuss scope of services to students from both colleges.		Timeline TBA
8.	Provide an individual who will perform duties as liaison for program.	Assign DE Counselor		ASAP
9.	Student/financial tracking and accountability issues.	Determine outcome data to be gathered.	Determine need and level of I.E. data gathering.	Ongoing after initiation of program
10.	Accreditation issues	All courses offered from HCC are fully accredited from SACS	Determine accreditation status because TM courses are Univ. Virtual and developed by MT/SACS approved faculty?	

<u>Issue</u>	<u>HCC Status</u>	<u>TecMilenio Status</u>	<u>Proposed Date</u>
11. Student records clarification	How will credit be transferred? Transcripts generated? Other issues?		
12. Other issues? (discussion)			

APPENDIX B

Email Invitation to Students

Email invitation to students - 5/5/06

Email from (DE Counselor):

Potential student enrollees in program

From (Name of DE Counselor) >
To <undisclosed-recipients@null>, <null@null>
Subject HCC Summer Class Opportunity
Date May 5, 2006 12:06 PM **Priority** NORMAL

Hello! The Distance Education Department wants to invite you to participate in an opportunity this summer. Houston Community College (HCC) is in the process of forming a partnership with a branch of Monterrey Tec University (located in Monterrey, Mexico) called TecMilenio. Its website is <http://www.tecmilenio.edu.mx/>. The partnership will allow HCC students to take classes online at TecMilenio and get credit here at HCC. If you don't know, Monterrey Tech is one of the elite institutions in Latin America, so this is quite an opportunity for HCC students to obtain a bicultural learning experience.

For this summer, we are starting by offering HCC students a chance to take the equivalent of BUSG 1301 (Introduction to Business) at TecMilenio. If you are following an Associate in Arts/Associate in Science degree plan, this class may apply as an elective. If you are following an associate in applied science degree plan, this class may apply to that plan, as well. Even for students who may have already completed their degree requirements, this class would provide a unique opportunity to learn business principles in a bicultural environment through a leading institution of higher education.

Since this class is taught in Spanish, it is necessary for participants in these classes to be completely bilingual (reading, writing, comprehending, and speaking Spanish).

For the summer session only, HCC is offering a full scholarship to a small number of students. You would need to purchase your textbook, but otherwise all expenses are paid. Remember, you will not need to travel to Monterrey for any reason, as the entire class is taught online. In return, you will earn 3 credit hours for BUSG 1301 and have a great learning experience with students from another country.

We will ask participants feedback/input on their experience in taking the online course, but the survey(s) will be confidential and online, and will not take much of your time.

The summer class will only last 5 1/2 weeks and will begin at the first part of June. The deadline to enroll in this summer class is 5/26/06, so if you are interested in taking advantage of this opportunity, please contact me right away.

Thank you and I hope to hear from you soon!

(Name of DE Counselor)
Distance Education Department
Houston Community College

APPENDIX C

Screening Tool for HCC Students Taking TecMilenio Courses

D R A F T

Screening Tool for HCC Students Enrolling in TecMilenio Courses

IMPORTANT NOTE: This form should only be completed by HCC students wishing to take the Spanish placement for the TecMilenio courses.

Students wishing to learn more about the HCC Distance Education Program should send inquiries to de.counseling@hccs.edu or 713.718.5275 option #4.

INSTRUCTIONS: Please complete the three parts of this data form in its entirety before depressing the submit button. **TIP:** The tab key allows you to move from field to field.

PART I: Completing the personal information section of this data form is critical for student/counselor communication and advisement. All fields are required, unless labeled as optional.

PERSONAL INFORMATION (required)

Your nine-digit HCC ID number: _____

OR

The last 4 digits of your SSN #: _____

First Name: _____

Middle Name: _____

Last Name: _____

E-Mail Address: Email will be the primary form of communication.

(required): _____

Telephone numbers:

Day: _____ Ext: _____

Eve: _____ Ext: _____

Cell: _____ (optional)

ENROLLMENT INFORMATION: (required)

The semester I am inquiring about for TecMilenio courses is:

Fall: _____

Spring: _____ Year: _____

Summer: _____

Have you ever taken a DE Internet course before?

Yes: ____ No: ____

SPANISH PLACEMENT REQUEST: (required)

____ I will take the Spanish placement to see if my Spanish skills meet the minimum requirements for the TecMilenio courses.

MISCELLANEOUS: (required)

Rate your Computer Skill Level: _____ novice
_____ intermediate
_____ expert

Rate your Internet Experience Level: _____ novice
_____ intermediate
_____ expert

PART II: DIRECTIONS: (required) Read each statement carefully and check the square on the left hand side of the statement to indicate that you have read and agree with the information.

- I understand that I must have excellent Spanish skills in reading, writing, speaking and comprehension.
- I understand these courses are only five (5) weeks.
- I understand that each course costs \$286.00. Textbooks and additional material for courses are not included in tuition and fee costs.
- I understand that the courses at TecMilenio will be taught completely in Spanish by a TecMilenio professor.
- I understand that I am responsible for dropping/withdrawing from the TecMilenio courses. I must also abide by the HCC academic withdrawal policy.
- I understand that the last day for refund tuition is based upon the HCC academic calendar.
- I understand that TecMilenio's courses will be delivered through the course management system WebTEC which is different from HCC's course delivery system WebCT.
- I understand that the TecMilenio professor awards course grades.
- I understand that it is my responsibility (student) to be certain that the course(s) I select at TecMilenio, will apply towards my HCC degree plan.

QUESTIONS, COMMENTS AND SPECIAL NEEDS REQUESTS (OPTIONAL)

Please verify the information entered above before submitting data form.

Thank you! Your request number is: _____
Please print this page for your records.

1. You will be contacted by (name of HCC Liaison), DE Counselor via email to provide you with:

- Spanish Placement Instructions
- Password
- Additional Information

2. After taking the Spanish placement – WebCAPE

If you meet the minimum WebCAPE score of 550, please contact (name of HCC Liaison) for additional information at (HCC Liaison email address).

Please include the following information:

- Your Full Name
- WebCAPE Test Date – month, day, year
- WebCAPE Score

If you have any questions or comments, please contact (HCC Liaison) at:

(phone number) or (email address)

APPENDIX D

Template: HCC Student Enrollment Process for TecMilenio Courses

D R A F T

Template: HCC Student Enrollment Process for TecMilenio Courses

1. **HCC ADMISSION PROCESS:** Must be a current HCC student or complete the HCC admission process before proceeding to step 2.
2. **EXCELLENT SPANISH SKILLS:** Students must have excellent reading, writing, speaking and comprehension skills for the TecMilenio courses. Student must take a Spanish placement – WebCape and meet the minimum score.

Contact DE Counselor – (HCC Liaison) for:

- Information about Spanish Placement – WebCAPE.
 - Course advisement & general information.
 - Information about the HCC/TecMilenio Partnership.
 - Students will be contacted by DE Counselor to discuss Spanish placement results and qualified students will proceed to step 3.
3. **COMPLETE THE DATA FORM:** Students who meet the minimum Spanish placement requirement must complete and submit the HCC/TEC (HT) Data Form.
 4. **CONTACT DE COUNSELOR FOR:**
 - course advisement.
 - issuance of course reference number (CRN).
 - discuss registration process.
 5. **REGISTER FOR COURSE(S):** The TecMilenio Registration Liaison, (name of TecMilenio Liaison) will assign permission numbers to students in PeopleSoft and contact students by email to notify student of registration clearance.

Students will enroll through the HCC Online Registration or on-campus. [Click here for On-line Registration](#) directions.

Students will Access Online Registration for:

- course registration
- payment is due at the time of registration – nonpaying students will be dropped from course(s)

*Tip: Print enrollment summary and payment page to keep for your records.

APPENDIX E

Template: HCC Business Process for TecMilenio Courses

D R A F T

HCC & Universidad TecMilenio Business Process

HCC Students	TecMilenio Students
Teaching Provider is TecMilenio	Teaching Provider is HCC
*Liaisons exchange course information and agree to promote course: Administración June 19 – July 18 th	BUSG 1301 – June 5 th – August 5 th
<p>1. Assessment – HCC students take Spanish placement- WebCape minimum score:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 500-599 Intermedio 2 • 600-700 Avanzado 1 <p>The due date for this exam is June 8th.</p>	<p>1. Assessment for TM students– TOEFL Passing TOEFL scores are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paper/Pencil Test (PBT):500 for now • Computerized Test (CBT): 213 • Internet-Based Test (iBT): 79
<p>2. Qualified HCC Students are assigned permission numbers in PS. Deadline is 2 weeks prior to the 1st day of class. Deadline: 5/21.</p>	<p>2. Qualified TM Students</p>
<p>3. Stop Enrollment. Deadline for HCC students to Enroll in TM course - June 9th. Exchange list of names. Liaison will provide student names, student ID's, & email addresses to each other via email.</p>	<p>3 Stop Enrollment HCC will stop enrollment 2 weeks prior to first day of class. Deadline for TM students to enroll in BUSG 1301- Summer 2006, May May 21.</p> <p>Exchange list of names. Liaison will provide student names, student ID's, & email addresses to each other via email.</p>
<p>4. Grades. TM Liaison forwards “alpha” grades to HCC. Provide TM the conversion to send alpha grades to HCC.</p>	<p>4. Grades. HCC liaison sends numeric grades after finals. –Summer 2006 – Aug. 6th.</p>

<p>5. Accounts Payable. TM Liaison sends 90% of student tuition to HCC.</p>	<p>5. Accts Payable –HCC Liaison sends 90% of student tuition to TM. HCC will send after last day of withdrawal date – June 20th.</p>
<p>6. End of Semester. (HCC Liaison) will email HCC students and ask that they complete a survey – student evaluation via Flashlight.</p>	<p>6. End of Semester. (TecMilenio Liaison) will email TM students and ask that they complete a survey – student evaluation via Flashlight.</p>
<p>7. Induction course. June 14 and June 15, administered for orientation to WebTec course management platform.</p>	<p>7. HCC Online Orientation. Require all TM students to complete online orientation.</p>

APPENDIX F

Additional Documentation of Meetings, Emails, and Procedures

The following eight “Online Support for TecMilenio Students” documents, entitled:

1. Welcome! Bienvenidos! TecMilenio Students
2. DE WebCT Sample Course: Successful Online Students – S.O.S
3. HCC Distance Education Contact List
4. How to Access HCC DE Internet Courses
5. Getting Started in the Courses
6. Academic Support/Tutoring
7. Testing
8. Textbooks

are drafts of website information that will be available from HCC to TecMilenio students who are preparing to enroll in HCC distance education courses. They are intended as guides to help address common topics of interest.

D R A F T

Online Support for TecMilenio Students

1. Welcome! Bienvenidos! TecMilenio Students

Hello, my name is (HCC Liaison) and I am one of the Distance Education Counselors at the Houston Community College (HCC). I will also be the liaison for Student Services in this new and exciting initiative between the Houston Community College and Universidad TecMilenio. Therefore, I will be working closely with (TecMilenio Liaison), the liaison at TecMilenio, to ensure a successful semester.

I feel so fortunate to be a part of this partnership because I am very fond of the people from Mexico and its rich culture. My parents are originally from Mexico and moved to Houston over forty years ago. I also hope that, in the near future, I can visit TecMilenio and possibly meet with you face to face. If you have any questions during your study at HCC, please feel free to contact me by email or telephone.

My email address is (email address) or I can be reached at (telephone number).

About the International Business Program at HCC

The instructors are experts in their fields with excellent academic credentials as well as lengthy experience in business and industry. Access the International Business Degree Program website for information about career opportunities and frequently asked questions about the program.

<http://www.hccs.edu/discipline/Ibus/ibusQA.html>

About HCC

I want to take this time to welcome you to the college and to tell you a little about this institution. HCC has 6 colleges and the distance education program. HCC is one of the largest community colleges in the United States serving over 55,000 students each semester from Houston and its surrounding area. It has the largest enrollment of international students of all community colleges in the country. HCC serves one of the most diverse populations in the nation.

To access a map of campus locations click on this link

<http://www.hccs.edu/new/mappg.html>

About Houston and its International Business Appeal

The Houston Community College is located along the Texas' Gulf Coast in the dynamic city of Houston. It is the fourth largest city in the U.S. with the largest medical center in the world. International business majors or individuals wishing to explore and implement international initiatives will have a great opportunity in Houston.

Learn more about Houston, Texas by accessing this link:
<http://www.houston.org/whyHouston/relocate.asp>

Topics of Interest (links):

- Why Houston is the gateway to global markets
- Why Houston is a great global city to live in
- Top Industries
- International Business Services
- International Business Events

D R A F T

Online Support for TecMilenio Students

2. DE WebCT Sample Course: Successful Online Students – S.O.S.

Successful Online Students (S.O.S.) is a sample online course that is easily accessible from the HCC – Distance Education (DE) Homepage. S.O.S. is a wonderful resource for students who are new to online learning, as well as for those who are simply considering taking classes online.

**To access S.O.S., visit the DE Homepage at the following URL:
<http://distance.hccs.edu/>**

At the bottom of the page, click the red Successful Online Students icon:



The S.O.S. sample course provides visitors with the opportunity to get a glimpse into the WebCT course environment, and learn about distance education at HCC.

Successful students in the DE Program at HCC have strong basic computer and reading comprehension skills. They should also be self-motivated, self-disciplined, and follow directions well. The course content will provide the opportunity for prospective students to gauge their DE readiness by their willingness to navigate their way through the S.O.S. to learn about the DE Program at HCC. Guests will also have the opportunity to take the self-test and read about common distance learning myths.

Frequently asked questions were included within the course content. Examples include DE student services: admissions, registration, and financial aid process, as well as a general overview of DE, how to access orientations, and online courses and testing information.

Learning how to navigate WebCT is critical for student success. Therefore, WebCT tutorials were included within the S.O.S. to motivate and encourage prospective students to access and review the tutorials before enrolling in an online course at HCC.

Moreover, information emphasizing success strategies such as career exploration, classroom etiquette, and study tips were also included. Finally, DE Counseling contact information was provided throughout the course to encourage prospective and current students to seek advising/counseling assistance from the DE Department.

Please review the S.O.S. course map below for a quick reference of what is presented within the S.O.S. WebCT Sample Course.

DE Successful Online Students (S.O.S.) Course Map (web links)

DE S.O.S. Homepage

- **Syllabus Icon**
 - DE Sample Syllabus
- **Calendar Icon**
- **Self-Test Icon**
 - DE Readiness Self-Test
- **Quiz Icon**
- **S.O.S. Notes Icon**
 - **Successful Online Students Icon**
 - Myths about Online Classes Notes
 - DE Sample SOS Syllabus Notes
 - Basic Computer Skills for Students Notes
 - DE Readiness Self Test
 - **Admissions to HCC Icon**
 - Admissions Process: New and Returning Students
 - HCC's International students link
 - **Course Registration Icon**
 - How To Enroll in Courses
 - DE courses offered this semester
 - View search schedule of classes- reveals real time enrollment numbers & what classes are still available for enrollment
 - Internet based enrollment process
 - On-campus enrollment
 - Registration Calendar link
 - DE Courses Offered link
 - View Schedule of Classes link
 - Catalog: Course Descriptions & Prerequisites link
 - Tuition Costs Chart link
 - **Financial Aid \$ Icon**
 - General Overview Notes
 - Scholarships Notes & links
 - FA Application Process Notes & link
 - Veterans Benefits Notes & link
 - **DE Student Services Icon**
 - Frequently Asked Questions link
 - Helpful Sites Icon
 - General Student Services link

- HCC Student Handbook link
 - Transcript Requests link
 - Students Living Out of Houston link
 - Special Needs link
 - Testing Locations & Schedule link
- **How DE Works Icon**
 - DE General Overview Notes
 - How to Access Your Class Orientation Notes
 - How to Access Courses via Internet Notes
 - DE Testing Formats Notes
- **Navigating WebCT Icon**
 - HCC WebCT Orientation link
 - WebCT Student Resources link
 - FAQ's for WebCT link
- **Study Skills Icon**
 - SQ4R Method for Reading link
 - Self-Help Info Sheets link
 - Exam Planner link
 - ABC Time Management link
- **Resources Icon**
 - **Career Exploration Icon**
 - Career Videos link
 - Free online assessment and tests link
 - Industry with the Largest Employment link
 - Highest Paying Jobs link
 - Fastest Growing Jobs link
 - New and Emerging Occupations link
 - Skills Profiler link
 - Labor Market Information link
 - **Classroom Experience Icon**
 - How to Talk to Your Instructor link
 - GPA Calculator link
 - Strategies for Building Self-Esteem link
 - **Financial Aid Icon**
 - HCC Financial Aid Homepage link
 - FAFSA Application
 - Contact FA
 - Internal Scholarships
 - **Library Icon**
 - HCC Library link
 - Ask a Librarian Link
 - Library Tutorial
 - **Online Tutoring Icon**
 - Smarthinking link

- **Study Tips Icon**
 - Subject Tutorials link
 - Math Anxiety link
 - Math & Science link
 - Reading link
 - Study Guides & Strategies link
 - Improving Memory link
 - Stress Management link
 - Time Scheduling Suggestions link
- **WebCT Information Icon**
 - FAQ's for WebCT link
 - HCC DE WebCT Orientation link
 - WebCT Student Resources link
- **Writing Papers Icon**
 - HCC DE Students Online Tutoring-Smarthinking link
 - Writing a Paper link
 - Useful transitional Expressions link
 - Revising Your Rough Draft link
 - How to Build a Positive Attitude About Yourself as a Writer link
- **Email Icon**
 - description about tool
- **Discussions Icon**
 - description about tool
 - sample discussions
- **Quizzes/Tests Icon**
 - description about tool
- **Assignments Icon**
 - description about tool
- **Grades Icon**
 - description about tool

D R A F T

Online Support for TecMilenio Students

3. HCC Distance Education Contact List

The following are the HCC staff involved with the HCC & TecMilenio Partnership. Also, students are encouraged to copy their email correspondence with other faculty or staff members to (HCC Liaison email address). This ensures that I can follow-up with you to determine if additional referrals are necessary. It will also help improve the quality of the student experience, because I can make recommendations based upon student inquiries and/or concerns.

Project Manager for HCC & Universidad TecMilenio Partnership

(Name), Executive Director, Instructional Research & Technology

(email address) or (phone number)

Department Chair for International Business Degree Program

Students with instructional concerns are encouraged and advised to contact (Dept. Chair, Business Administration) after first communicating your concerns with your instructor. (Dept. Chair) is committed to the students of HCC and would appreciate hearing from them.

- (Name), Dept. Chair, Business Administration

(email address) or (phone number)

Liaison for HCC & TecMilenio Students

(TecMilenio Liaison) of TecMilenio will continue to work closely with you, however, if I can assist you in any way, please do not hesitate to contact me.

- (HCC Liaison), DE Counselor

(email address) or (phone number)

DE Technical Support Staff

The HCC DE Department has a WebCT Support Team available for students. If you are experiencing technical difficulties or have questions about proper computer set-up, the technical support team is ready and willing to assist you.

If you have questions about navigating your online classes and/or orientations, contact your professor and/or DE Technical Support.

- (group email address) or (phone number)
- (technician's name and email address)
- (technician's name and email address)

DE Counselors for HCC

(DE Counselor) is also involved with the TecMilenio project. Therefore, in the event that you need assistance from me, and I am unavailable for more than 24 hours, you are encouraged to contact (name of DE Counselor).

- (Name), DE Counselor
(email address) or (phone number)
- (Name), DE Counselor
(email address) or (phone number)

Professor for BUSG 1301 – Introduction to Business

- (Name), HCC Professor
(email address) or (phone number)

DE Instructional Support Specialist (ISS)

At HCC, an Instructional Support Specialist (ISS) is assigned to every DE professor to assist students with general DE questions or general course information. The ISS for the International Business Degree Program is (name of ISS).

- (Name), Instructional Support Specialist (ISS)
(email address) or (phone number)

Registration Liaison for HCC Students Enrolled at TecMilenio

- (Name), Distance Education Associate
(email address) or (phone number)

DE Faculty and Smarthinking Liaison

Students wishing to request additional hours to access the online tutoring, Smarthinking may contact:

- (Name), Distance Education Faculty Liaison
(email address) or (phone number)

DISTANCE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

HCC Administration Building

3100 Main Street, 3rd Floor

Mail Code 1740

Houston, Texas 77002

D R A F T

Online Support for TecMilenio Students

4. How to Access HCC DE Internet Courses

Accessing the Online Course(s)

Students will access their online courses through the class finder for Internet based classes at http://distance.hccs.edu/wc/class_finder_current.shtml

Or:

1. First, go to the Distance Education Homepage; <http://distance.hccs.edu>
2. Secondly, click on “Access DE Courses/Orientations”
3. Lastly, select “Enter Online Classroom”

Tip:

You will be prompted to enter the course reference number (CRN). This is the five-digit number that identifies each individual class section.

You will also be able to locate the CRN from the information/documentation that TecMilenio has provided you regarding this course.

D R A F T

Online Support for TecMilenio Students

5. Getting Started in the Courses

Mandatory Class Orientations for all DE Courses

Every Distance Education course requires a mandatory online orientation. Your class “orientation” is your first class day. You will access the online orientation for each class.

DE Courses via Internet; Orientations

The orientation will be made available online at least three days prior to the start of the course. The Orientation includes:

1. A Welcome Statement from Your Professor
2. Course Syllabus Which Includes Required Textbooks and Testing Information
3. WebCT Tutorial
4. DE Information
5. DE Data Form; the form must be completed prior to accessing the course

DE Courses via Internet; Accessing Online Orientations

Students will access the Online Orientations at:

<http://distance.hccs.edu/wc/ori-finder-current.shtml>

Or:

1. First, go to the Distance Education Homepage, <http://distance.hccs.edu>
2. Secondly, click on [Access DE Courses/Orientations](#)
3. Lastly, select [Enter Online Orientation](#)

Tip: You will be prompted to enter the course number. The course reference no. (CRN) is the five digit number that identifies each individual class section.

Refer to the information that (TecMilenio liaison) has given you about the course to obtain the course reference number (CRN).

D R A F T

Online Support for TecMilenio Students

6. Academic Support/Tutoring

Online Tutoring for Students

HCC offers online tutoring to Distance Education students through a company called Smarthinking. TecMilenio students are encouraged to submit essays, and any writing assignments to Smarthinking for review. Access the link for days and times for English tutors. Every student is allotted six hours per semester, and additional time may be requested by contacting (email address, DE Faculty Liaison). Please identify yourself as a TecMilenio student and send me a copy of the message. (HCC Liaison email address).

How to Access Smarthinking from the “My WebCT” homepage

All HCC WebCT courses will include the Smarthinking icon in the upper right-hand corner of "My WebCT" homepage.

Announcements

Smarthinking
Online Tutoring



more...

HCC Distance Education Library Services

All HCC WebCT courses will include the DE Library Services icon in the upper right-hand corner of "My WebCT" homepage.

One of the best features for the DE students is the availability of an online librarian available to assist you with questions. There are also links to online study tips, LibLine: An HCC Libraries Blog and much more....

Institutional Bookmarks

**HCC Distance Ed
Library Services**

[Ask Dr. C](#)

[Subscribe to a free WebCT newsletter](#)

[Instructors: Find ready-made content for your WebCT course](#)

[Access WebCT online support](#)

Helpful Links

- Writing a Paper
<http://www.utexas.edu/student/utlc/lrnres/handouts/1231.html>
- Useful Transitional Phrases
<http://www.utexas.edu/student/utlc/lrnres/handouts/1279.html>
- Revising Your Rough Draft
<http://www.utexas.edu/student/utlc/lrnres/handouts/1234.html>
- How to Build a Positive Self-Image About Yourself as a Writer
<http://www.utexas.edu/student/utlc/lrnres/handouts/1318.html>

Support for Students with Disabilities: DE Testing

Any student with a documented disability (e.g. physical, learning, psychiatric, vision, hearing, etc) who needs to arrange reasonable accommodations must contact the appropriate Disability Support Service (DSS) Counselor at the beginning of each semester. Faculty are authorized to provide only the accommodations requested by the Disability Support Services Office. Contact (HCC Liaison) at (email address) and I will be happy to refer you to a Disability Support Services (DSS) Counselor.

D R A F T

Online Support for TecMilenio Students

7. Testing

DE Testing; Internet Based Courses

The courses offered to TecMilenio students will include online testing. Every professor tests uniquely, therefore, refer to your class syllabus for information specific to your class. Your professor will provide dates, times, and allotted time for each test.

DE Testing; Students with Disabilities

Any student with a documented disability (e.g. physical, learning, psychiatric, vision, hearing, etc) who needs to arrange reasonable accommodations must contact the appropriate Disability Support Service (DSS) Counselor at the beginning of each semester. Faculty are authorized to provide only the accommodations requested by the Disability Support Services Office.

Contact (HCC Liaison name) at (HCC Liaison email address) or (phone number). She will be happy to refer you to a Disability Support Services (DSS) Counselor.

D R A F T

Online Support for TecMilenio Students

8. Textbooks

1. **Online Vendor for TecMilenio Students:**

You will continue to purchase your HCC textbooks from the online vendor you normally use at Universidad TecMilenio. Contact (TecMilenio Liaison name) for details at (TecMilenio Liaison email address).

2. **HCC Online Bookstore:**

TecMilenio students who want to purchase their textbooks through the HCC Online Bookstore, can contact the bookstore manager at (bookstore manager email address).

The following information will be required from the student:

- course you need books for and the CRN (section #)
- whether you want required only, or recommended titles as well
- your name and physical address for shipping textbooks
- credit card number, expiration date, and 3 digit security code on the back of your card (in the signature strip).

3. **Prentice Hall Online:**

Students may also purchase their textbooks directly from Prentice Hall. Your professor will have details in the class syllabus.

Meetings of 4/17-18/06

At TecMilenio, Monterrey, MX

Meeting attendees:

TecMilenio Liaison

Exec. Director, Instructional Resources & Technology, HCC

DE Counselor, HCC

1. **MISSION (OBSERVATION, EVALUATION):** The issue of mission was discussed. Although much discussion on this topic has already taken place, both in previous meetings involving the overall economic development project between the two institutions, it was important again to clarify several key points in this area. Through our conversation, all parties assured each other that it was in the best interest of each program to continue with this program because it fit within their individual missions and supporting strategies. Internationalization of programs was of key interest and it was agreed that the online partnership was one way to accomplish this in an extremely cost effective way. Both institutions already have a strong traditions and key mission strategies to expand their online programs. Both institutions also expressed an interest in expanding these programs internationally. In fact, Monterrey Tec, the parent institution of TecMilenio, has been doing this for many years with programs/partnerships in the U.S., Canada, Latin America, South America, Europe, and Asia.

Comments and assurances were also made expressing the point that, if strategic goals of TM or HCC did not match, it would be difficult, and perhaps pointless, to continue with this proposed project.

2. **PILOT COURSE (PLANNING):** All agreed that, with initiating a program of this sort, that we develop a single online “pilot” course be used as a first offering. Keeping the concept in mind that maintaining quality is critical and it is much better to “walk before we run,” the group agreed that a class should be selected from each institution (one from HCC, one from TM) that we will offer as a pilot course in the summer 06 semester. Following that offering, and an evaluation of the student, faculty, and administrative experience in that course, it is the intent of both institutions to increase course offerings in the fall. In a subsequent meeting, this was also agreed upon by (name of Rector, TecMilenio system).

This is of benefit to administrators, faculty, and the first students involved. All can begin to learn about the program w/o a large student population or sizeable institutional commitment. We can experience potential problem issues, strengths, and future needs on a smaller scale. We can then grow the program, making adjustments on the way.

What is also critically important is that this first class be personally selected by

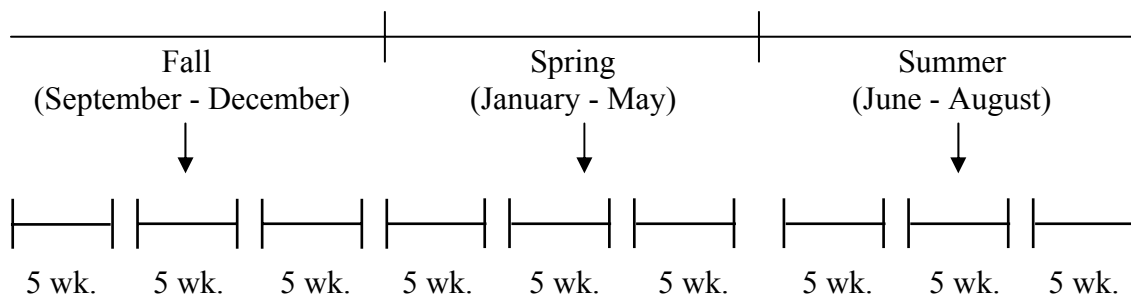
the administrators at both schools based on qualifications and experience of the instructor (particularly with international students), their tenure at teaching online, their willingness to work with international students, and their understanding of the partnership that is underway between the two institutions.

It was agreed that a separate cohort class of international students would not be the preferred method of populating the class. Rather, for this pilot course and for future student enrollment, students from each of the respective institutions will be enrolled in classes together with domestic students who would normally be registered in these sections. As mentioned throughout this study, a primary component and overall goal of both the distance learning partnership and the economic development project in general is “involvement with international programs [which] offers American community colleges opportunities for exchange of ideas, experiences, and resources” (Kintzer, 1998, n.p.). This is an identified priority for HCC, part of its mission, and should be achieved through this online partnership. This is also a goal echoed by TecMilenio. This is critical component of the global experience for students.

Regarding selection of this first pilot course, it was also discussed that this first offering need not specifically be part of the international business curriculum. Rather, it should have more universal or widespread appeal for student recruitment and it could also be an elective.

3. **SEMESTER SCHEDULES (PLANNING):** Semesterly schedules were discussed in detail. Coordination of schedules for both institutions and students emerged as an issue of critical importance. It would be difficult to coordinate teaching schedules, payments, etc. if schedules were not similar. Concurrently, it would also be difficult for students to take classes that did not coordinate or overlapped with the academic calendars of their own home institutions. After all, we are attempting to remove barriers, not create them.

TecMilenio works on an unusual academic calendar by typical American standards. They depict it as a trimester system and it is described as well as graphically represented below.



- Each of the three trimesters consists of three, five-week classes.
- A student typically enrolls in two of these classes during each five-week session.
- Each class meets for four weeks. The fifth week of each session is reserved for final examinations.
- A student must take 54 classes to meet graduation requirements.
- The entire degree program, from beginning to graduation, typically takes a full-time student three years to complete.

This trimester system compares favorably with HCC's academic calendar. In fact, it is nearly identical with respect to HCC's fall, spring, and summer semester system:

- Fall semester – September to December
- Spring semester – January to May
- Summer semester – June to August.

Also, all of HCC's distance education classes each semester do not take up the entire 16-week session. Although 16-week classes would still work within one of the TecMilenio trimester terms, during the "long" semesters (Fall and Spring) HCC offers 8-week as well as some 5-week versions of 3-credit classes.

Accordingly, 2, 8-week HCC classes or selected 5-week classes would more readily fit into TecMilenio's academic calendar. A determination will be made in the near future as to what length course will be offered as a pilot course.

In general, it was agreed that more 5-week online classes need to be developed at HCC, not only to benefit flexibility for the international online partnership, but also to expand offerings and flexibility for HCC students normally enrolled in online classes. Expanding flex entry courses will also be examined.

Overall, it is critical that partnering institutions demonstrate flexibility in their scheduling and length of academic online classes. To not have that flexibility limits both the number of courses students can enroll in and the overall level of globalization and interaction students can accomplish.

From a technical standpoint, both institutions expressed the need and agreed to have "downtime" for their distance education course servers between terms. Downtime essentially means that there needs to be a short period when, after completion of each semester, all students are removed from the course server, course "shells" or files are removed, technical maintenance is performed, appropriate software updates are carried out, and other key repairs are completed. This downtime will work with both HCC and TecMilenio.

4. **ACCREDITATION (PLANNING & IMPLEMENTATION):** Accreditation issues were extensively discussed particularly from the standpoint that HCC currently carries SACS accreditation yet TecMilenio does not. However, as pointed out in Chapter 1 – Introduction, TecMilenio is not yet formally seeking SACS accreditation because, in many ways, they feel that allows them to experiment without many of the restrictions that SACS imposes. However, as a parent institution, Monterrey Tec and the Universidad Virtual (the entity that produces all of TecMilenio’s online courses) already possess full SACS accreditation.

Further, as will also be discussed when addressing registration arrangements, students from both institutions will register for online classes offered by the partner institution as students from their home colleges. In other words, an HCC student registering for a TecMilenio online course will register as an HCC student and do so at HCC. Conversely, a TecMilenio student will register for HCC online classes as a TecMilenio student and do so from his/her home site. That way, despite the fact that TecMilenio does not currently carry SACS accreditation, HCC students will get HCC credits for courses taken from T.M.

Regarding transfer of credits/courses, the instructor at TM will report the numeric final grade to the HCC TM Liaison. The HCC TM Liaison will then report the numeric grade to the HCC instructor of record for the grade to be converted into a letter grade and posted. Likewise, the instructor at HCC will report a numeric grade to the HCC TM Liaison. The HCC TM Liaison will then report the numeric grade to the TM instructor of record for the grade to be posted. Since, at this time, accreditation is not of as much concern for TM, transfer of accredited course from HCC is not of paramount importance to them.

It was decided that all TM courses offered to HCC students would need to be reviewed to determine that the TM courses are equivalent to the HCC courses. So, they are being reviewed for course equivalency purposes by (Name, Manager of Educational Partnerships).

Transcription of classes was also discussed. At both institutions, the classes will be transcribed at the institution registering the students. For example, HCC students who register into a class that will be taught through TecMilenio will register and pay for the class at HCC and the class will reflect on his/her HCC transcripts, and vice versa.

5. **LANGUAGE ISSUES (PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION):** All courses offered from HCC will be in English. All courses offered from TM will be in Spanish. Therefore, the program can only currently be offered to students who are bilingual. Although this was anticipated to be a problem at first, after discussion and planning, it did not appear that this problem or issue would

remain. Because of their close geographical proximity to the U.S./Mexico border, both institutions have a very high percentage of bilingual students.

Having the “luxury” of a high percentage of bilingual students may not be the case with other international online programs. The literature review revealed that, by far, English is the predominant language for offering international distance learning programs. With the growth of Latino and Asian educational markets, this predominance may need to be revisited in the near future.

Further, it was explained that HCC requires a minimum TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) exam score of 550. According to (TecMilenio Liaison), this did not appear to pose a problem for bilingual TecMilenio students.

6. **STUDENT ORIENTATION MATERIALS (PLANNING):** Of key importance in the establishment of this program, and for any online program, are the orientation materials provided or made available to the students. This was discussed extensively. It may not be an exaggeration to say that an institution, and particularly a community college, cannot provide enough orientation materials to students. Certainly, more attention must be given to current orientation services and processes. Not only should orientation be mandatory for all first-time, on-campus students, but it is equally, if not more important for online students. With the sense of time and physical detachment that is inherent in the asynchronous online experience, quality orientations must be provided to these students.

An overview of current orientation materials provided to online students from both institutions was discussed. They included:

<u>HCC</u>	<u>TecMilenio</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Successful Online Students (SOS) course <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Free to any visitor, no HCC registration required. ○ Course content introduces learner to WebCT and to how the distance learning service runs at HCC. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mandatory online induction course <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Available to TM students prior to each trimester ○ Available only to registered students
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mandatory comprehensive online orientations for all online classes 	

7. **FACULTY TRAINING (PLANNING):** Another area of administrative concern expressed at the meeting was that of faculty training. Wanting to ensure that

faculty from both institutions possessed the appropriate skills and experience to teach quality online courses, representatives of both institutions described the training required of all faculty teaching online courses. It included the following:

<u>HCC</u>	<u>TecMilenio</u>
Faculty Certification in Technology (Basic Level) – 48 contact hours, 11, 4-hour classes, including Orientation to Distance Learning at HCC	One primary 8-hour course is now mandatory, 2 more additional mandatory classes for faculty are planned.

It was also discussed that faculty who had experience in teaching foreign students online would be an added, but not required, advantage. It was not required since so few faculty had this experience at either institution.

8. **ADMINISTRATIVE MGMT. OF CURRICULUM (PLANNING):** Courses offered. TecMilenio currently offers 15 complete degree programs online. HCC also offers a variety of degree programs. However, the workforce degree program initially central to the establishment of the online partnership was the A.A.S. in International Business. HCC explained that 15 of the 20 courses currently required for this degree were available online. It was also discussed that nearly all students taking courses from partner institutions will not be specifically seeking the full degree but rather looking to take individual courses to supplement their home institution program. Therefore, although HCC will place extra emphasis on developing the remaining 6 courses for the International Business degree, it is not imperative.

As discussions went on during this meeting, it was also discovered that other programs besides International Business may be of mutual interest. These will be explored in the near future.

9. **GRADING (PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION):** It was determined that grading and grade reporting was also important to decide. Grading at each institution is performed as follows:

<u>HCC grading system</u>	<u>TecMilenio grading system</u>
A, B, C, D, F (below 65 is not a passing grade)	All number grades. 70 is a passing grade. Also, students must score above 65 on any final exam to pass entire course.

As a result of this difference in grade reporting, coordination must be made to appropriately report scores to partner institutions. HCC faculty must report

number grades to TM for those students enrolled in their classes. TM faculty must report letter grades to HCC for their students.

10. **FINANCIAL AID (PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION):** Financial aid issues were also extensively discussed. Since all students participating in this program will not apply for admission or be officially registered at the partner institution, financial aid will not be as much of an issue as originally anticipated. Early on, it was of concern that HCC students would not be able to receive financial aid for courses taken from an international college or university. Essentially, there was a concern of aid not being available, but since the HCC group will remain HCC students, aid can still apply. Since all students will always remain students of their home institution and register for courses at their home institution, financial aid will not be a problem. An HCC student will register for a TM class at HCC and still retain the financial aid he/she would normally receive as part of their academic studies.

However, it was explained that nearly all TM students pay their own way. There is very little financial aid offered to students except for scholarship “discounts” that are sometimes received. In those cases, some TM students pay only half tuition because they are currently working for a company in an industry that supports TM to train their employees. In those cases, students receive a discount of half tuition. TM does not receive the other half of the tuition. Again, it is essentially discounted.

This may present a problem for these TecMilenio students to participate in HCC courses if they must pay full tuition. It was agreed that HCC will examine alternatives for these students, perhaps discounting tuition for them as well.

11. **TUITION (PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION):** It’s critically important that the program is priced appropriately and affordably for all students involved. It has been this author’s experience that, when discussing potential international programs in the past, the currency exchange rate between the U.S. and many foreign countries makes an American education financially unreachable and prohibits students from participating. This was openly discussed with TecMilenio. Interestingly, this potential partnership presented a situation not previously encountered with other international interests. That is, TecMilenio’s basic tuition rate was *higher* than HCC’s in-district tuition.

TecMilenio: \$286 USD (converted from pesos) per class

HCC: \$153 USD + \$24 distance education fee = \$177 per class

It’s also critically important that one institution does not underprice or undercut the other in terms of tuition. This would not be fair and would encourage a majority of students to be registered at the school with the less expensive tuition.

It was agreed that, to create an even playing field for both institutions, that a standard tuition rate of \$286 per course would be charged to all students, regardless of home college. However, each college will register their own students for classes taken online from the partner college. Also, for this service, the college registering the student will keep a service fee of 10% of the tuition.

For example, For TecMilenio students taking classes from HCC, the tuition rate will be \$286. TecMilenio will collect the entire amount from the students. Of that total, TecMilenio will keep a service fee of 10%, or \$28.60. HCC will be paid 90% of the total, or \$257.40. The exact opposite will apply for HCC students taking online classes from TecMilenio.

This financial arrangement, or any financial arrangement in a partnership of this type accentuates the need for appropriate accounting measures to be implemented prior to the beginning of the program. It was agreed that an individual will be designated at each institution to establish separate accounting spreadsheets as well as accounts receivable and payable. This way, appropriate revenues and payments can be tracked and accounted for. This will also aid toward contributing to accountability outcomes and statistics when fully evaluating the program at a later date.

12. **MARKETING ISSUES (PLANNING):** The question of how, where, and when to market programs was discussed extensively. HCC brought a number of suggestions and recommendations to the table.

It is interesting that, as a Distance Education Counselor at HCC, it is (name of DE Counselor) job to consult with students on available programs and advise them accordingly. (DE Counselor) mentioned that she had already received several telephone calls from HCC students inquiring about participating in this international program. This was premature and had occurred long before the program has been even established, announced, or marketed.

Administrators should take into account a certain degree of confidentiality when planning new programs. They should not unduly build student anticipation or excitement about new programs prior to their establishment.

HCC discussed and/or suggested a variety of marketing/advertising strategies that might be used. They included:

- Announcing the program through a web link on the HCC home page.
- Announcing the program through a web link on the Distance Education home page.

- Placing an ad in the Distance Education Course Schedule.
- Having instructors mention the program in their Intensive English classes that TecMilenio students are enrolled in.
- Placing ads in the *Egalitarian*, HCC's student newspaper.
- Placing an ad and a web link to a program description in the HCC WebCT login page. This is the page all registered distance education students at HCC must use to access their classes.
- Announcing the program through the HCC Northeast College Business Dept. This is the department that offers all online courses for the International Business degree program.
- Using the services of HCC recruiters currently on staff at each of the colleges.
- Marketing the program through HCC student organizations. HCC Student Life Coordinators help coordinate these groups. HCC currently has an International Student Association.
- Present the program to all HCC Counselors at monthly in-service sessions.
- Provide notification/announcement of the program to Student Services, Academic, and Workforce Deans.

As of this meeting, none of these tactics have been employed, nor has the cost or efficacy of any been investigated. These were all mentioned in the meeting as possibilities which will each be examined further during the spring and summer semesters (prior to full implementation of the program).

(TecMilenio Liaison) responded that TecMilenio will provide a draft list of marketing or advertising strategies based both on the HCC list mentioned above and other concepts. (TecMilenio Liaison) will do so after consultation with (Director of Development for Distance Education at TecMilenio).

13. **TECHNICAL SUPPORT (PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION):**
 Despite the fact that all students who would participate in the program would be bilingual, it was also agreed that technical support would also be available bilingually. Just by their nature, online programs not only inherently create a distance between student and instructor, they also create a distance between students and any other types of assistance they require – including technical support. Therefore, it was discussed and decided that, to assist and support students from another country that speaks another language, Spanish-speaking technicians would be available from HCC. TM committed to investigate this service from their institution. It was also discussed that this same support could be provided to staff from each institution who had questions or sought technical assistance.

14. **COUNSELING/STUDENT SERVICES (PLANNING):** It was determined that bilingual counseling and student services would also be made available. Specific services discussed in this area that would be provided by HCC included:

- Degree planning (in collaboration with TM liaison).
- Course transfer assistance (in collaboration with TM liaison).
- Individually specialized DE program and course orientation.
- Career guidance (in collaboration with T.M. liaison).
- Academic advising.
- Provide DE Counselors as liaisons to T.M. for ease in student transition.
- Until all course examinations are online, mailing of course exams, when necessary, to the designated T.M. test proctor w/ full proctoring and testing instructions and receiving the tests from the proctor upon completion.

These services may change as the project develops.

15. **TESTING (PLANNING):** Online testing is currently a requirement for all TM online classes but not for HCC classes. It was preliminarily determined that each of the pilot courses offered in the summer will include online testing.

16. **ESTABLISHING PROJECT LIAISONS (PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION):** It was determined that a liaison will be designated as the key individual who will oversee the operation of the program for each institution. These liaisons were identified. They are:

<u>HCC</u>	<u>TecMilenio</u>
(HCC Liaison) Distance Education Counselor	(TecMilenio Liaison) Academic Director of Distance Education Center

17. **ACCOUNTABILITY/TRACKING STUDENT PERFORMANCE (PLANNING):** Tracking student performance and finances, accountability outcomes, etc. The importance of accountability in the community college was explained to (TecMilenio Liaison). Potential areas discussed for data collection were:

- # of courses taken by students from both institutions.
- When courses were taken.
- Profile of grade distribution.

- Results of Student Evaluation of Instruction (SEOI).
 - Graduation rates for students in program.
 - Revenues generated from program.
 - Assessing variety of student engagement measures.
18. **NEXT MEETING:** Although all parties will remain in continual contact regarding this project, it was projected that the next face-to-face meeting will be held in Houston in early May (possibly 5/4-5/5). Visitors will include (TecMilenio Liaison, Director of Development for Distance Education at TecMilenio, and Vice Rector of Distance Education).

HCC hopes to make another visit to TecMilenio in late May. The HCC staff will potentially include (Exec. Dir., Instructional Resources & Tech., DE Counselors).

Meeting of 4/19/06

Meeting participants:

DE Counselor and HCC Liaison for TecMilenio partnership
Exec. Dir., Instructional Resources & Tech., HCC
DE Counselor, HCC

1. **CHOOSING AN APPROPRIATE PILOT COURSE FOR THE FIRST OFFERING IN THE SUMMER/06:** (Exec. Director) is now investigating the best course to choose as the first pilot to implement in the summer/06 semester. The first suggestion is to implement ECON 2302 – Microeconomics/Principles of Economics. It is a required course in the International Business curriculum. Also, one of the HCC instructors who teaches ECON 2302 online is (name of instructor), an instructor who has previous experience with international student cohorts, having taught an experimental ECON course to a class of 15 students in Pakistan approximately 2 years ago.

Also, one of the requirements TecMilenio makes is that all course we offer to them include online testing. (Instructor's name) ECON 2302 includes online testing.

Phone calls and email have been placed to (instructor's name) to explain the project and see if he is interested in participating with the pilot course.

2. **MARKETING:** It was discussed that some marketing activities need to occur now if we are to establish a pilot course for the summer semester. A number of tactics were discussed. (HCC Liaison) will document and present them (see meeting of 04/04).
3. **DISCREPANCIES/DIFFERENCES IN TUITION AND SCHOLARSHIPS:** It was determined that, in order to better attract students for the pilot course, that scholarships be investigated. Additional funds should be identified that supplement the difference in cost between what in-district HCC students normally pay for 3-credit courses (\$153 tuition + \$24 distance learning fee = \$177) and the price set for courses in this international partnership (\$286 tuition/course).

\$286 (tuition for classes in international program)

\$177 (standard in-district tuition for HCC students)

\$109 difference to be supplemented through potential scholarships

(Exec. Dir.) subsequently visited with the HCC Vice Chancellor for Economic Development. (Name of VC, Econ. Dev.) is in charge of the HCC Foundation and can provide assistance in seeking scholarship funding to support HCC students for the pilot course taken from TecMilenio.

It was determined that the difference, \$109 for 15 students (projected to be enrolled in the pilot course) could be provided. Total scholarship funds:

$$\begin{array}{r} \$109 \\ \times 15 \text{ students} \\ \hline \mathbf{\$1635} - \text{total scholarship} \end{array}$$

Meeting of 4/21/06

Meeting participants:

DE Counselor and HCC Liaison for TecMilenio partnership
Exec. Director, Instructional Resources & Tech., HCC
DE Counselor, HCC

1. **COURSE EQUIVALENCY ISSUES (ADMINISTRATIVE COORDINATION OF THE INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS CURRICULUM AND SYLLABI):** (HCC Liaison) spoke to (Dept. Chair, Business Administration). (Dept. chair) will provide (HCC Liaison) with the International Business Degree syllabi for all courses. (HCC Liaison) will supplement that with the syllabi for all the other supporting "academic courses" included on that degree plan. (Dept. chair) and (HCC Liaison) will have that completed by the end of next week.
2. **MARKETING/RECRUITING EFFORTS.** There is concern that many of the bilingual students at HCC have not had a formal education in Spanish and therefore, their reading and writing skills may not be college-level. (HCC Liaison) spoke with (Dept. Chair, ESL) this afternoon re: this. He agreed. (HCC Liaison) suggested she contact former ESL students that were now enrolled in college level courses at HCC. This way HCC can offer them the opportunity to take classes at TecMilenio in Spanish which would be very appealing to this group since Spanish is their first language.

In fact, the overall issue of student readiness was discussed. Not only would language skills be an issue, but also student readiness to take distance learning courses. We do not want to invite student frustration or failure – especially during the pilot course phase. It was discussed that initial marketing efforts would keep screening for both student readiness and language skills in the forefront.

However, (Dept. Chair, ESL) pointed out that some of these students may not qualify because they haven't passed TSI. Many are still enrolled in developmental courses at HCC. However, we don't yet know if this matters since TSI is a Texas requirement and, as long as they meet TecMilenio's minimum requirements, they should be OK. Noting that, at TecMilenio, (DE Counselor) and (Exec. Dir.) discussed minimum TOEFL requirements at HCC (550), but we're wondering if TecMilenio has an open admissions policy. (HCC Liaison) will follow up with (TecMilenio Liaison) to see if their college has any testing requirements.

3. **MARKETING FLYER DEVELOPMENT:** (HCC Liaison) is also working on a flyer as requested. She will have a rough draft early next week and will share it with (Exec. Dir.) and (DE Counselor). When the text is ready, (HCC Liaison) will submit a work request to IMC so that they can help us make it attractive and eye-catching.

OTHER PROPOSED MARKETING IDEAS

- Send this information through the HCC News
 - Ask the instructors of the Business Administration course to send a message alerting the students about this opportunity. This message could be sent through WebCT email.
 - Place message on the WebCT Homepage.
 - Visit the Spanish 2312 classes of (Dept. Chair, ESL) and (name of ESL instructor).
 - Send flyers to the HCC Counseling Departments for posting.
 - Send this information through the counseling list serve.
 - Ask campus managers if fliers can be posted on their campus bulletins.
 - Place information in the HCC Egalitarian.
 - Send a mass email to DE Students.
 - Contact former ESL students who are currently taking HCC courses. Undecided majors may want to explore the International Business Degree for its bilingual appeal.
 - Send information to the ESL departments so that they can mention this to the students who are completing level IV this semester. Level IV is the last level of the Intensive English Program. Undecided majors may want to explore the International Business Degree for its bilingual appeal.
4. **ADA ISSUE:** We are not aware of specific ADA-type requirements or accommodations at TecMilenio.

Meeting of 4/24/06

Meeting participants:

Director, Student & Financial Services
DE Associate, HCC
DE Counselor and HCC Liaison for TecMilenio partnership
Exec. Dir., Instructional Resources & Tech., HCC
DE Counselor, HCC

1. **ACCOUNTING ISSUES:** Accounts must be set up to:

- Track revenue
- Track expenses
- Track student registration
- Ensure state reimbursement for HCC students taking courses from TM

Director, Student & Financial Services, was asked to attend this meeting to provide his expertise on setting up new accounts for this project. This is imperative for the reasons stated above.

(Director, Student & Financial Services) recommended setting up two accounts:

- Payable account
- Revenue account

When tuition/funding is received from HCC student upon registration for a TecMilenio course, funds will automatically be split between the two above accounts. 90% of the funds will go to payable account, 10% will go to our own revenue account. When funds are paid to us from TM students registering for HCC courses, those funds will be deposited in the revenue account. All accounts will be set up by item type. (Exec. Dir.) put in paperwork to request setting up these accounts today.

Also, a separate CRN # (course number) will be set up for HCC students taking TM course. That way, we can more easily identify those students and ensure that state reimbursement is secured. However, the appropriateness of state reimbursement must be explored and determined.

2. **SCHOLARSHIP ISSUES AS THEY RELATE TO PAYMENT OF TUITION:**

A question was asked as to how the recently-secured scholarship funds could be applied to each registration? (Director, Student & Financial Services) said that appropriate transfer of funds information from the scholarship fund could be accomplished within PeopleSoft and the HCC financial accounting system.

Meeting of 4/26/06

Meeting participants:

DE Counselor and HCC Liaison for TecMilenio partnership, HCC
Exec. Director, Instructional Resources & Tech., HCC
DE Counselor, HCC
Distance Education Associate, HCC
Distance Education Faculty Liaison, HCC

1. **LANGUAGE - PROFICIENCY ISSUES:** Minimum TOEFL scores for TM students taking HCC classes was discussed. It was determined that HCC requires a minimum of 550 on the paper TOEFL, 213 on the computer-based version, and 79 on the web-based TOEFL. (TecMilenio Liaison) will be informed of these HCC institutional standards.
2. **STUDENT SERVICES - STUDENT SELF-SCREENING TOOL:** (HCC Liaison) introduced the concept and need for an online student self-screening tool at HCC for students who may consider themselves candidates for this international online program. The screening tool will serve as an initial introduction to the program for all interested students and will also link to a self-assessment questionnaire which will determine a student's level of candidacy. Personal identification, tuition, calendars, language proficiency, refunds, and a number of other key requirements will be assessed. The student will also be required to check a box indicating they have answered all questions truthfully to the best of their abilities.

If the student qualifies, their responses and data will be forwarded to (HCC Liaison) for the international partnership, for further contact and consideration. If the student does not qualify, they will be informed online after responding to all questions on the questionnaire.

(HCC Liaison) will work with HCC's Instructional Media Center to devise this online tool.

3. **DATE FOR TRANSFER OF FUNDS BETWEEN HCC AND TM:** A date was recommended to be the time at which tuition funds will be transferred between the partner institutions. It will be recommended to (TecMilenio Liaison) that this date be the day after the deadline for a minimum 25% refund for withdrawal. This is approximately 20 school days after the beginning of each semester).

Meeting of 4/29/06

Meeting participants:

DE Counselor and HCC Liaison for TecMilenio partnership, HCC
Exec. Dir., Instructional Resources & Tech. HCC
Manager, Educational Partnerships, HCC

1. **CHOOSING AN APPROPRIATE PILOT COURSE FOR THE FIRST OFFERING IN THE SUMMER/06:** It appears now that ECON 2302 will not be the best or appropriate choice for the first pilot course. Minimum proficiencies in mathematics, English speaking, and writing must be demonstrated by TecMilenio students before they can register for this academic course (ECON 2302). Rather, these proficiency requirements would not be as stringent with the workforce courses that comprise the majority of courses in the International Business degree plan.

Therefore, a different course has been identified as a pilot – BUSG 1301, Introduction to Business. BUSG 1301 is in the Business Administration curriculum and is a workforce class.

It was also determined by the instructor of BUSG 1301, (name of instructor), that an accelerated, five-week version of the course would not be acceptable. Even for HCC native English-speaking students, there is too much content to cover in a five-week time span. It may be even more difficult for students for whom English is a second language. Therefore, the decision was made to offer the full semester version of the course.

TecMilenio students do not have to adhere to TSI testing. This exemption applies because HCC does not get state funding for students who do not reside in Texas. However, TecMilenio students do need to satisfy HCC prerequisite requirements for "academic" courses. According to the HCC catalog, Economics 2302 prerequisites are college level reading, to be placed into math 0308 or higher, and be placed into ENGL 0310/0349 or higher in writing. Therefore, TecMilenio students would need testing in writing (essay) and math.

2. **TOEFL** (Test of English as a Foreign Language) scores will still be necessary to screen a prospective student's English proficiency skills. TOEFL scores address non-native issues – essentially an assessment of how ready a student would be for studying at a community college. TOEFL simply evaluates the student's comfort level with English. However, it is not a placement test.

(Manager, Educational Partnerships) said that some TecMilenio students may have taken the English SAT exam since many may be trying to attend school in the U.S. He also said that it doesn't have to be a test that is "official." It can be a writing sample which is evaluated by a qualified person. For example, an English instructor.

HCC just needs to have a test that indicates that the TecMilenio students are also abiding by the same prerequisite requirements as the HCC students.

Meeting of 4/31/06

Meeting participants:

DE Counselor and HCC Liaison for TecMilenio partnership

DE Counselor, HCC

Manager of Educational Partnerships, HCC

1. **COURSE EQUIVALENCY AND TRANSFER:** The Manager of Educational Partnerships stressed the importance of the partnership, through the Executive Director, gaining support and buy-in from not only the appropriate Department Chairs, but also the Academic/Workforce Deans and Presidents when pursuing HCC courses to offer to TM students and TM courses to offer to HCC students.

Manager of Educational Partnerships agreed to review the course syllabi that TM will provide to HCC for equivalency, but stated that the instructors and department chairs should review them as well, since the instructor's name will be the one assigned to the class (the instructor of record) and verifying that his/her objectives were met.

Email of 5/1/06

Email from TecMilenio Liaison to:

DE Counselor
DE Counselor, HCC Liaison to TecMilenio project
Exec. Dir, Instructional Resources & Technology
Vice Rector of Distance Education, TecMilenio
Director of Development, Distance Education, TecMilenio

LANGUAGE ISSUES (PLANNING): Via email – TecMilenio Liaison informed HCC staff that English language proficiency requirements might be more difficult for many TecMilenio students to meet. She indicated that this requirement may limit the potential student market from TecMilenio.

From | TecMilenio Liaison
To DE Counselor>
Cc HCC Liaison, Exec. Director, Vice Rector of Distance Education (TecMilenio), Director of Development (DE, TecMilenio)
Subject RE: Houston Community College Follow-up from Meeting
Date May 1, 2006 10:15 AM **Priority** NORMAL

Hello (name of DE Counselor),

Thank you for your response, I take note about the TOEFL scores. I think the score is high for our students, which perhaps would reduce the number of participants in the future courses.

Take care:

(Name of TecMilenio Liaison)

Email of 5/3/06

Email from (name of instructor) – Professor, Business Administration, HCC to:
DE Counselor, HCC Liaison to TecMilenio project
DE Counselor
Exec. Dir, Instructional Resources & Technology
Director, Instructional Media Center, HCC
Trainer, Instructional Media Center, HCC

PILOT COURSE: Recommendation of field testing of BUSG 1301 – Introduction to Business pilot course from (Professor, Business Administration)

From	Name of Professor	
To	DE Counselor, HCC Liaison, Director, Instructional Media Center, Trainer, Instructional Media Center	
Cc	Exec. Director>	
Subject	Review Pilot Course	
Date	May 3, 2006 1:42 PM	Priority NORMAL

Greetings to everyone. I visited with (Exec. Director) today and he asked me to contact each of you regarding the pilot course being offered this summer to the Monterrey and HCCS students. Sometime this week, I would appreciate feedback from each of you regarding the course as it stands currently.

Also, please provide the TecMilenio liaison with login privileges so that she can review the course as well.

Remember, this is very rough and a work in progress. I still need to make a pass for any mistakes I may have made to date.

Direction into the course:

1. Go to <http://de5.hccs.edu:8900>
2. Log on using your individual names, use the default password
3. The default password is the same for each of you (distance)

Once you are in the course, I have set a conditional entrance exam for all students to take. Please take a moment to complete it. Once completed, you and students will have entrance into the course.

Thank you in advance for helping me out. I believe this pilot course is a group effort and as a team, we can ensure HCCS, the DE and Business Administration Departments will all look good and hopefully our students will learn the material being presented.

Email of 5/4/06


Email from (TecMilenio Liaison) to:

DE Counselor, HCC Liaison to TecMilenio project

DE Counselor

Exec. Dir, Instructional Resources & Technology

PILOT COURSE SELECTION (PLANNING, IMPLEMENTATION): Via email – (TM Liaison) informed HCC that the course they will offer as a pilot will be Administración.

From (TecMilenio Liaison)
To '(HCC Liaison)
Cc '(Exec. Dir.) (DE Counselor)
Subject RE: HCC DE Counselor
Date May 4, 2006 10:34 AM **Priority** NORMAL
Attachments  [PN04002.doc](#)

Hello (HCC Liaison),

I appreciate the information about the course, for the one that we are going to offer I suggest "Administracion". I am sending to you the syllabus for this course so you can review it, also the information about the text book.

Bibliografia:

Libro de texto

Ferrel, O. et al. Introduccion a los negocios en un mundo cambiante. 4ta ed. Mexico: Mc Graw Hill Interamericana Editores, 2004. ISBN: 9701039424

Libros de apoyo

Robbins, Stephen y Decenzo, David. Fundamentos de Administracion.. Naucalpan de Juarez, Edo. de Mexico: Pearson Educacion de Mexico. 2002.
Stoner, Freeman y Gilbert. Administracion. Mexico, D.F: Ed. Prentice Hall., 1996.

Take care,

(TecMilenio Liaison)
Universidad TecMilenio

Course Description – Administración
(TecMilenio Course Initially Offered to HCC Students)

NOMBRE DE LA ASIGNATURA O UNIDAD DE APRENDIZAJE (1) Administración

Módulo de Administración

CICLO (2) Tetramestre 1

CLAVE DE LA ASIGNATURA (3) PN04002

OBJETIVO(S) GENERAL(ES) DE LA ASIGNATURA (4)

El alumno al finalizar el programa será capaz de identificar las funciones administrativas en diversos contextos asociándolos con las etapas del proceso.

TEMAS Y SUBTEMAS (5)

- 1 Administración
- 1.1 Escuelas
- 2 Definición
- 3 Niveles administrativos
- 4 Roles
- 5 El trabajo del administrador
- 6 Relación de la administración con las otras ciencias
- 7 Organizaciones
- 7.1 Concepto de lo que es organización, industria , negocio y factores de medio ambiente
- 7.2 Clasificación
- 8 Proceso administrativo
- 8.1 Planeación
- 8.2 Organización
- 8.3 Dirección
- 8.4 Control
- 9 Funciones de la administración
- 10 Administración de operaciones
- 10.1.1 Concepto de Administración de Operaciones
- 10.1.2 ¿Cómo ayuda a la administración en las organizaciones?
- 11 Administración de la mercadotecnia
- 11.1.1 Concepto de Mercadotecnia
- 11.1.2 Las cuatro P's de mercadotecnia
- 11.1.3 Investigación de mercados
- 12 Administración de los recursos humanos

- 12.1.1 Administración de Recursos Humanos
- 12.1.2 Funciones de la Administración de Recursos Humanos
- 12.1.3 Administración de Recursos Humanos y su apoyo a la administración de las organizaciones
- 13 Contabilidad y las finanzas
 - 13.1.1 Área funcional de Finanzas
 - 13.1.2 Sistema bancario mexicano
 - 13.1.3 Funciones del banco central
 - 13.1.4 Organizaciones auxiliares de crédito
- 14 Responsabilidad social
 - 14.1 Conceptos y aspectos de la responsabilidad social
 - 14.2 Efectos de los asuntos de medio ambiente, consumidores y relaciones laborales en los negocios
 - 14.3 El papel de la ética en la toma de decisiones
- 15 Medio ambiente internacional
 - 15.1 Diferencia entre ventaja absoluta, ventaja comparativa y ventaja competitiva nacional
 - 15.2 Formas de proteccionismo
 - 15.3 Formas de actividad de los negocios internacionales
 - 15.4 Bloques comerciales

ACTIVIDADES DE APRENDIZAJE (6)

Éstas se definirán de manera específica con base en la aplicación de metodologías de aprendizaje centradas en el alumno.

Las actividades de aprendizaje incluyen:

1. Trabajo en equipo a través de espacios de colaboración y asignación de tópicos que propicien la discusión, el intercambio de información y la construcción de conocimiento.
2. Auto-estudio e investigación a través de la asignación de temas, revisados vía exámenes periódicos y tareas o trabajos.
3. Elaboración de ensayos, resúmenes y mapas conceptuales que permiten tener un testimonio de la comprensión, análisis e interpretación de la información obtenida por el alumno.
4. Práctica de los temas revisados mediante la resolución de ejercicios y/o elaboración de proyectos para reforzar el conocimiento adquirido.
5. Reflexión por parte del alumno sobre el proceso de construcción del conocimiento, que lo lleve a identificar las áreas de oportunidad en su quehacer de aprendizaje favoreciendo así la metacognición.

Meeting of 5/8/06

Meeting participants:

Department Chair, Business Administration, HCC
DE Counselor and HCC Liaison for TecMilenio partnership
Executive Director, Instructional Resources & Tech., HCC
DE Counselor, HCC

1. **DEVELOPMENT OF NEW ONLINE COURSES TO COMPLETE ONLINE PROGRAM:** Since the International Business is the degree program that has been designated to be offered first to TecMilenio students, development of remaining courses in that program not already available online is necessary. Currently, 15 of the required 20 classes for the degree are available. Discussions were held with (name of dept. chair) regarding the development of the remaining courses. They include

<u>Course #</u>	<u>Course Name</u>	<u>Planned Instructor</u>
• IBIS 2341	Intercultural Management	(name of instructor)
• IBUS 1301	Principles of Exports	(name of instructor)
• IBUS 1370	Economic Geography	(name of instructor)
• IBUS 2335	International Business Law	(name of instructor)
• IBUS 1302	Principles of Imports	(name of instructor)

(Exec. Dir.) discussed with (Dept. Chair) the HCC/DE process to begin developing each of these courses. (Dept. Chair) promised to have faculty identified for all prospective courses by the end of this week.

The possibility of developing and offering 5-, or 8-week versions of these courses was also discussed. (Dept. Chair) said that some courses (e.g., BUSG 1301, a course already existing online) were difficult to teach even in a 16-week semester because of content requirements. He said we would have to look at each course individually to determine if shorter versions were feasible.

(Exec. Dir.) also discussed TecMilenio's desire to have all course tests/exams offered online. (Dept. Chair) felt this was possible to accomplish.

There was some discussion regarding how co-ops were going to be offered. (Dept. Chair) recommended setting up the co-ops with the current employers of the TecMilenio students. A total of 16 hours of meetings between students and faculty are required per semester. He suggested that one-hour videoconferencing sessions be used weekly to have the students communicate with the faculty at HCC. However, if possible, it would be better if the TecMilenio students could travel to Houston for one weekend and fit in all 16 hours at one time.

Meeting of 5/10/06

Meeting Participants:

DE Counselor, HCC Liaison to TecMilenio project
Mgr., Educational Partnerships, HCC
DE Counselor

1. **IMPORTANCE OF BUY-IN FROM ACADEMIC AND WORKFORCE ADMINISTRATION:** (Mgr., Educ. Partnerships) stressed that (Exec. Dir.) needs to get support and “buy in” from the appropriate deans, chairs, and presidents to make this new partnership work.
2. **MONITORING/OVERSIGHT OF COURSE:** (Mgr., Educ. Partnerships) believes the instructor of record on the HCC transcript should review the TecMilenio syllabi to be sure they are okay with the course content.
3. **COURSE EQUIVALENCY:** Regarding SACS acceptability of courses from TM, a non-accredited institution, (Mgr., Educ. Partnerships) said he didn’t see a problem as long as the department chair and instructor of record take the responsibility of reviewing the course and syllabus to ensure content is appropriate and equivalent.
4. **GRADING:** (Mgr., Educ. Partnerships) feels the instructor of record at HCC should input the grades from TecMilenio.
5. **OTHER DISCUSSION POINTS:** (Mgr., Educ. Partnerships) recommended that the students should have a portfolio. It should include the syllabus and other pertinent information from TecMilenio courses so that they can use it as a selling point during a job interview.

(Mgr., Educ. Partnerships) initially thought the “set up” was going to be similar to the Saigon project and had suggested the instructors at TecMilenio become HCC employees so their name can be listed as the instructor on record. However, (DE Counselor) then clarified the course exchange arrangement with TecMilenio.

Email of 5/12/06

Email from Manager of Educational Partnerships, HCC to:
DE Counselor, HCC Liaison to TecMilenio project
Dept. Chair, Business Administration, HCC
DE Counselor, HCC
Exec. Dir, Instructional Resources & Technology

LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY ISSUE (TOEFL SCORES):

From (Mgr., Educ. Partnerships)
To (HCC Liaison)
Cc (Dept. Chair) (DE Counselor) (Exec. Dir.)
Subject Re: TOEFL --- TECMilenio Students
Date May 12, 2006 4:01 PM **Priority** NORMAL

You have it right. The issue is English proficiency. TOEFL is one way to assess, but an additional counselor's recommendation is fine, as long as the counselor is determining what is best for the student and not just trying to put bodies in classes. Also, be sure and emphasize that students may need language help and support on both sides, so there must be mechanisms in place to provide the same. mark

(HCC Liaison) wrote:

> Hi (Dept. Chair), I spoke to (TecMilenio Liaison) from TecMilenio yesterday. She asked if there was flexibility with lowering the TOEFL score from 550 to 500. I initially told her the minimum score for HCC Workforce/Academic courses was 550. However, after speaking to (Mgr., Educ. Partnerships) about it today, he said the test is to determine language proficiency therefore the score is "negotiable." If you feel that the TecMilenio students can do well in the Business Program with a lower score, then it is okay to lower the score per (Mgr., Educ. Partnerships), please let us know if I misunderstood you..

(Dept. Chair), (TecMilenio Liaison) also asked me if it was possible for the TecMilenio students to take another test in place of the TOEFL because they may not have enough time to take the TOEFL exam before the BUSG 1301 course begins this summer. (Mgr., Educ. Partnerships) said that it may actually be possible for TecMilenio students to get clearance from perhaps a counselor from TecMilenio to give them the "okay" for the language proficiency.

(Dept. Chair), do you feel comfortable lowering the TOEFL score to 500? And do you feel comfortable allowing a "counselor" or another qualified individual to individually assess the TecMilenio student's English proficiency? Let me know so that I can forward this information to her.

Thank you.

Meeting of 5/15/06

Meeting Participants:

DE Counselor and DE Dept. liaison for TecMilenio partnership, HCC
Exec. Director, Instructional Resources & Tech., HCC
DE Counselor, HCC
Manager of Educational Partnerships, HCC
Registrar, HCC
Vice Chancellor, HCC

1. **STUDENT SERVICES (OFFICIAL HCC CLASSIFICATION OF COURSES):**
A meeting was held with (Mgr., Educ. Partnerships) and (Registrar) to determine how the courses that HCC students would be taking from TecMilenio would be classified for state reporting. It was determined that, after consultation with (Vice Chancellor), that HCC could not come to that determination alone. It was decided that a letter be drafted by (Mgr., Educ. Partnerships), with support descriptive information from (Exec. Director), which would be sent to the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board. That letter would describe the course exchange program and request guidance for state reporting purposes.

2. **DELAY OF FULL PILOT COURSE OFFERING:** It was also decided, in consultation with (Vice Chancellor), that this, and a variety of other issues needed to be determined prior to the time full pilot course was ready to be offered to students from either institution. With only several weeks to go before our deadline for enrolling students in TecMilenio courses, there were too many student service and other related “loose ends” existing for HCC to feel comfortable offering the pilot course. A potential list of these included:
 - Student Identification numbers
 - Access to TecMilenio catalog and/or student handbook
 - Some course equivalency issues
 - Enrollment processes
 - WebTec Sample Course Access for HCC Students
 - Webpages for HCC students with information about TecMilenio
 - Webpages for TecMilenio students with information about HCC
 - Syllabi
 - Marketing/Recruiting – pilot course phase:
 - Implementation of TecMilenio strategies to recruit students
 - Implementation of HCC strategies to recruit students

As a result, the group decided to delay the offering of the full enrollment (15-20 students) pilot course until the Fall/06 semester. Concurrently, (HCC Liaison) reported that, in her most recent conversation with (TecMilenio Liaison), that she was also feeling that a significant number of details were still not in place to be

comfortable about offering the full pilot course as the first offering in the summer.

All agreed that HCC would register 3-5 TecMilenio students in the BUSG 1301 class for the summer semester to perform a preliminary evaluation. All also agreed that HCC screen and register 2-3 students in the TecMilenio Administración course this summer to gauge their experience with it. The students would receive credit for the course since (Dept. Chair, Business Administration) has already approved it for equivalency with HCC's BUSG 1301 – Introduction to Business.

Email of 05/16/06

Email from HCC Liaison to:

Exec. Dir, Instructional Resources & Technology

FINALIZATION OF MARKETING PLANS FOR INTRODUCTION OF INITIAL SUMMER COURSE.

From HCC Liaison
To Exec. Director
Cc
Subject Marketing strategy for HCC & TM
Date May 16, 2006 4:32 PM **Priority** NORMAL


To confirm our discussion, the marketing strategy for both Universidad TecMilenio and the Houston Community College will initially entail sending emails to prospective students to invite them to take a course abroad via Distance Education this summer. As an additional marketing tool and as a check for student readiness, those students who are interested will be screened for eligibility.

HCC will specifically target students who are declared business majors by email and/or telephone. (Professor, BUSG 1301) will personally contact students he believes are fluent in Spanish and briefly tell them about the pilot course at TecMilenio. Students wishing more information will be referred to me as the HCC Liaison for the project.

Email of 5/23/06

Email from Exec. Dir, Instructional Resources & Technology to:
HCC Liaison
Dept. Chair, Business Administration

LANGUAGE ISSUES: Final determination of Spanish language proficiency instrument to be used by TecMilenio for HCC students.

From Executive Director
To (HCC Liaison) (Dept. Chair, Business Admin.)
Cc
Subject WebCape--Spanish Placement
Date May 23, 2006 1:11 PM **Priority** NORMAL
Attachments  [05_01PROCESS3.doc](#)

TecMilenio has chosen WebCAPE as their Spanish proficiency exam.

WebCAPE is an internet implementation of the BYU Computer Adaptive Placement Exams designed to work in a JavaScript-capable Internet browser program running on any computer connected to the Internet. It has been extensively tested with both Netscape and Internet Explorer on both Windows and Macintosh platforms.

Email of 5/2306

Email from HCC Liaison to:

Dept. Chair, Business Administration:

Exec. Dir., Instructional Resources & Tech.

COURSE EQUIVALENCY AND LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY ISSUE: Final confirmation of acceptance and equivalency of TecMilenio "Administracion" course to BUSG 1301 – Introduction to Business. Also, confirmation of acceptability of paper/pencil TOEFL score of 500 for TecMilenio students enrolling in HCC classes.

From (HCC Liaison)
To (Dept. Chair, Business Admin.)
Cc (Exec. Director)
Subject Re: TECMILENIO Course Equivalency
Date May 23, 2006 12:35 PM **Priority** NORMAL

Thanks. (HCC Liaison).

(Dept. Chair) wrote:

> In reviewing the information from TecMilenio's Administration course, in my judgment, I would have no problem giving our HCC students credit for our BUSG 1301, Intro. to Business. (Dept. Chair name)

>

>> Thanks (Dept. Chair), I'll forward this to (Exec. Dir.) for his records. Also, can you send the "okay" about the course equivalencies for HCC BUSG 1301 with TecMilenio's Administracion course. Thanks a bunch. (HCC Liaison)

>>

>> (Dept. Chair) wrote:

>>

>> > Let's go with 500 for now and we'll reassess after the semester. (name of Dept. Chair, Bus. Admin.)

>> >

>> >> Hi (Dept. Chair), I am in the process of organizing all of my notes for the TecMilenio project and (Exec. Dir.) and I noticed that we don't have any written confirmation from you about the TOEFL score nor the approval of the TecMilenio course.

>> >> (Dept. Chair), I probably just need a reply from you stating that you approved lowering the TOEFL score to 500 and that you approved TecMilenio's course - Administracion to be equivalent to HCC's BUSG 1301 Introduction to Business.

>> >>

Thank you in advance, (HCC Liaison)

Email of 5/23/06

Email from HCC Liaison to:

Exec. Dir, Instructional Resources & Technology, HCC

LANGUAGE ISSUES: Finalization of all TOEFL requirements for TecMilenio students.

From (HCC Liaison)
To (Exec. Director)
Cc
Subject TOEFL
Date May 23, 2006 10:27 AM **Priority** NORMAL

To finalize, here are the current passing/acceptable TOEFL scores:

Paper/Pencil Test (PBT): 500

Computerized Test (CBT): 213

Internet-Based Test (iBT): 79

Email of 5/26/06

Email from (HCC Liaison) to:

Exec. Director, Instructional Resources & Tech., HCC
DE Counselor, HCC
DE Associate, HCC
Dept. Chair, Business Administration
Professor, Business Administration

LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY ISSUE: Confirmation of WebCape English proficiency scores

ADA ISSUE: TecMilenio liaison indicated that their may not be any state or federal disability accommodation requirements for TecMilenio.

From	(HCC Liaison)
To	Exec. Director)
Cc	(DE Counselor) (DE Associate) (Dept. Chair, Business Admin.) (Professor, Business Admin.)
Subject	[Fwd: RE: Spanish Placement for TecMilenio Courses]
Date	May 26, 2006 4:00 PM Priority NORMAL

(TecMilenio Liaison) and I spoke this afternoon. As you requested, TecMilenio has established minimum WebCAPE language proficiency scores.

1. Below is the scale for the Spanish Placement --WebCape. Advance level 1 = student qualifies
600-700 Avanzado 1
Intermediate 2 = student must earn at least a 550
500-599 Intermedio 2

2. ADA issue- (TecMilenio Liaison) said she is unaware of ADA-like guidelines in Mexico. However, she stated that extended testing will not be a problem for TEC. She said that I just need to send her the names of the students that need extended testing and the professor(s) will extend the testing.

----- Original Message -----

Subject:RE: Spanish Placement for TecMilenio Courses

Date:Fri, 26 May 2006 15:23:38 -0500

From:(TecMilenio Liaison)

To:(HCC Liaison)

Hola:,

Los niveles del examen de español son:
Below 250 Basico 1

250-399 Basico 2
400-499 Intermedio 1
500-599 Intermedio 2
600-700 Avanzado 1
Above 700 Avanzado 2

Me recomiendan que al menos deben de obtener 500 puntos, es decir si quedan en Avanzado 1 estan aceptados, los que esten en Intermedio 2 seria cuestion de revisar si obtuvieron mas de 550 puntos.

Saludos cordiales,

(TecMilenio Liaison)

Email of 5/30/06

Email from HCC Liaison to:

TecMilenio Liaison

Exec. Director, Instructional Resources & Tech., HCC

GRADE REPORTING: Confirmation of grading scale to be used for HCC students enrolling in TecMilenio online courses.

From (HCC Liaison)
To (TecMilenio Liaison)
Cc (Exec. Dir.)
Subject Grading scale
Date May 30, 2006 2:28 PM **Priority** NORMAL

(TecMilenio Liaison), (Exec. Dir.) requested I send you the HCC grading scale:

A (90-100/Excellent)

B (80-89/Good)

C (70-79/Fair)

D (60-69/Passing)

F (Failing)

W (Withdrawn)

If you have any additional questions about the grading scale, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Take care, (HCC Liaison)

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