

DIVERSIFICATION OF COURSE FORMATS FOR NICHE MARKETS

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ABSTRACT

The Business Division at Lewis-Clark State College has, over the past decade, gradually evolved from in-class, conventional delivery over the full semester to one of several diverse modalities. These include, conventional lecture/discussion for the full semester; multiple-site microwave/compressed video lecture/discussion; condensed, four week-end sessions; WebCT-based courses over the full semester; and, most recently, hybrid courses which combine abbreviated in-class meetings with an internet component. Each of these, its application and its strengths and weaknesses will be discussed.

BACKGROUND

As with other institutions, or course offerings have expanded into diverse formats. Initially, Distance Learning meant courses offered off-campus at outreach sites. Then came abbreviated offerings: forty-hour, one-week courses and forty-plus hour, four week-end (Friday night, all-day Saturday), one-site and point-to-point. Of course, the web presented the ability to deliver content and activities to nearly any location. This initially took the form of courses but has now folded back on the other modalities to allow hybrid offerings which include both face-to-face (if only video) and internet components.

That was the good news. As with corporations which compete in several markets, the management of these modalities – even at the “brand” level – was not possible with a one-size fits all approach.

Many of our successes and failures will be discussed as will some of what we have learned.