Introduction

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During the past few years, online learning has moved from a fringed activity to a key component in nearly every universities' long-term strategic plan. For instance, the most recent Sloan-C report reveals that nearly a third of all university courses are taken online (Allen & Seaman, 2011). In fact, in 2010 over six million students took at least one course online. We have seen strong growth at the University of Colorado Denver of the years as well. For instance, in 2009 13,245 took at least one online or hybrid course. That number increased by 9.7% to 14,666 in 2010. It then increased another 7.58% to 15,869 in 2011. In fact, in 2011, 32.89% of students at our institution took at least one online or hybrid course which suggests that currently a third of our students are taking online or hybrid courses.

If online learning continues to grow 10% or more each year as it has been, it will not be long before 50% or more of the courses taken at universities will be completed online. And by that time, students will likely have to complete a number of courses online in order to graduate. Because of changes like these and the overall growth of online learning, more and more emphasis is being placed on ensuring that the courses being offered online are of the highest quality. From Sloan-C's 5 Pillars (see: http://sloanconsortium.org/5pillars) to the Quality Matters Program (see: http://www.qmprogram.org) to other home-grown initiatives, universities across the country are interested in finding ways to make online learning not simply as good as face-to-face instruction, but the best it can be!

Here at CU Online, we have strived to implement a number of different programs and initiatives over the years to help faculty design, develop, and teach the highest quality courses possible. *The CU Online Handbook* is just one example of one of these initiatives.

The CU Online Handbook was conceived as an opportunity to let faculty share some of the great things that they are doing in their online courses across our university. The first *CU Online Handbook* (Lowenthal, Thomas, Thai, &Yuhnke, 2009) was published in 2009 (see: http://cuonline.ucdenver.edu/handbook2009). Over 200 copies were printed and distributed among faculty and staff. *The CU Online Handbook* is also available online as an e-book. The site has had over 3,000 page views since it was published. While we are thrilled with the reception we got from the first *CU Online Handbook*, we set out with this second edition to have more short and accessible articles with even more contributors. Themes throughout this edition of *The CU Online Handbook* focus on how faculty can connect and build relationships with students and how technology can help in this process.

Whether you have been teaching online for years or are just beginning, in this edition of *The CU Online Handbook*, we hope that you can pick up some new ideas to help improve the quality of the online courses you design, develop, and teach.

References

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