Our priority objective: Improve the quality and scope of distance education offerings; increase response to online enrollment demand.

Plans to make progress toward this objective: Last year, our major efforts were directed toward providing incentives and support to faculty considering teaching a new online course, and learning about our online students through Program Review. We are continuing that work this year, but have added new programs that directly support our online students, that provide more direct training for new online faculty, that support existing online faculty, and that begin to build an online teaching community.

Specific projects:

Support for online students:

1. Develop an Introduction to Online Learning course for students, to be piloted in Spring 08. Status: Course outline approved, two sections of course scheduled for Spring and instructors assigned, course in advanced development stage. In the Spring, we hope to derive some “mini-modules” from this course which can be provided to any online instructor that wishes to use them.

2. Expand Blackboard student support hours in Spring 08, particularly during the initial 3 weeks of the semester and during finals week when the need is highest. Status: Support plan has been developed, approved, and funded. Plan will provide Bb support from 8 a.m. to midnight M-F during first 3 weeks of Spring semester and finals week, and weekend online support throughout the semester. Hiring is underway, and training will occur as part of a pilot during this semester’s finals week.

3. Make on-campus orientations available for all online students. These optional sessions will provide Blackboard log-in help, an overview of Blackboard, and online student success tips. Status: Twelve orientation sessions have been scheduled and included in the Spring schedule. Staffing and development of presentation materials is underway.

4. Revamp the printed course schedule and Class-Web information about online courses to make it simpler for students and to help shrink the size of the printed schedule. Status: Completed. The printed course schedule and Class-Web have been significantly revised, and a new Chabot webpage has been developed (and linked to the homepage) to provide clearer, more detailed information for online students. Our longer-term goal is to provide a “portal” for online students.

5. Pilot a library skills module that Norman Buchwald has developed under a Basic Skills grant, designed to provide an online equivalent of a library
orientation for online students in classes which require research papers.
Status: The pilot is underway, and we'll have results by the end of the semester which will be used to make any necessary improvements prior to a larger-scale rollout of the program in Spring 08.

6. Conduct a survey of our online students to identify their motivation for taking online courses and to identify their needs (courses, support, class design, tutoring, etc.). Status: The survey has been developed, but we have postponed fielding the survey until Spring to give us time to work through survey administration process issues. We may pilot the survey in one or two classes this semester.

7. Pilot online tutoring programs and explore technology options in conjunction with the Learning Connection. Status: A brief canvas of what other colleges are doing in this area has been completed, as has one meeting with the Learning Connection and a few faculty interested in online tutoring. Much more remains to be done in this area.

8. Upgrade to Blackboard 7.3 to eliminate previous compatibility issues with Apple computers, and with the Vista operating system. Status: We've worked with LPC and District to determine that Summer 08 will be the best time to upgrade. We have significant work to do to prepare both students and faculty for this significant upgrade.

9. Develop a brochure for students interested in online learning. Status: We'll begin to draft this brochure this semester, and it should be available next Spring.

10. Develop a series of seminars for students interested in online learning that will enable them to determine if online learning is a good fit. Status: Will offer these sessions in late Spring 08 for students considering a Summer/Fall 08 online course.

11. Finalize the online course evaluation process. Status: The Spring 07 pilot of online course evaluations was assessed, and recommendations were made to the FA to improve the process. An MOU has been concluded based on these recommendations, and the new process is now underway. It's an important step, as it assures an evaluation of the quality of our online offerings, including the very important student feedback.

Support for new online faculty:

12. Provide modest incentives for faculty that develop and offer an online course. Status: The online course development incentive program has been continued this year, but we reduced the incentive from $750 to $400 to enable us to fund programs for our online students. The number of new courses has declined vs. last year, but we believe that is not connected to the incentive amount.

13. Provide continued support for faculty training. Status: We have continued our $250 training incentive for faculty that take an @One course in online teaching, and also continue to offer the support of an experienced online faculty mentor. In the next few weeks, we'll also announce the availability of a new course for faculty that guides them through the process of "Developing
an Online Course Proposal”, and will offer a $250 for those that complete the assignments in this course. (Note: faculty can take this course without completing any assignments if they choose to do so, but will not receive the incentive payment.)

14. Conduct a survey of all Chabot faculty to determine attitudes toward online learning, information needs, and training needs. Status: The survey has been completed, and we’re now working with Institutional Research to analyze the survey. This should be completed by the beginning of Spring semester, and will provide important input for our priorities for Spring 08.

15. Develop additional courses for online faculty, including “Developing Your Course in Blackboard” and “Online Pedagogy”. Status: Work on these courses hasn’t begun, but we hope to have at least one of these available for Fall 08.

Support for current online faculty:

16. Offer “mini-grants” to current online instructors to enable them to purchase and pilot new online teaching technology. Status: We offered these mini-grants, and have awarded seven grants for Spring 08. The recipients will purchase the software and/or hardware, pilot them in their Spring 08 online courses, and provide a report back to the DE Committee.

17. Provide additional tools to ensure the academic integrity of online courses, such as SafeAssign or Turnitin. Status: Blackboard 7.3 comes with a free SafeAssign, an anti-plagiarism tool. We’ll test this in the Spring as LPC conducts a comparison of its current Turnitin tool with SafeAssign, and plan to have a recommendation for Fall 08 implementation.

18. Explore the opportunities to provide campus-wide online teaching tools that significantly enhance student learning. Status: We are currently looking at options for broader adoption of Respondus online testing software. We also plan to look at Campus Pack (blog, wiki, podcast tool), iTunes University, and other options in Spring-Fall 08.

19. Upgrade to Blackboard 7.3. Status: As explained above, compatibility issues with Mac and Vista are becoming significant, so we will upgrade to 7.3 in Summer 08. Significant training is required for this major upgrade to enable faculty to fully utilize the many new features and to adapt their courses as needed for this new version.

20. Begin to build an “online teaching community” at Chabot that enables exchange of ideas and support for all online faculty. Status: We held our first “Fifth Hour Forum” in October, a casual College Hour discussion amongst online teaching faculty or those interested in the topic. Our initial forum focused on trends/changes we’re seeing with our online students and academic integrity. Our second forum will focus on accessibility of our online courses to students with disabilities. We also developed and distributed an Online Learning News that focused on new support programs for our online students, and invited new ideas. It’s a start.