Charting Our Progress: The Evolution of a Master's Degree in Educational Technology

Elizabeth M. Willis PhD
Center for Excellence in Education
Northern Arizona University
PO Box 5774
Flagstaff, AZ 86011
Office Phone: 520-523-0354
Email: becky.willis@nau.edu

"At the end of the millennium in which the idea of the university has blossomed, population growth is outpacing the world's capacity to give people access to universities. A sizable new university would now be needed every week merely to sustain current participation rates in higher education. New institutions are not being created at this frequency. A crisis of access lies ahead....the world's educators should aim to ensure that all people can develop their potential in the essentially unlimited domain of human skill and intellect." (Daniel, 1996, p. 4-5)

The principal challenge to the flexibility of universities is the changing nature of the student body. Meeting this challenge requires more cost-effective methods of education and training. A steadily increasing proportion of university students are working adults who do not find attendance on campus a convenient way to learn. Lifelong learning describes the need for people to continue their education and training throughout their life as they face multiple careers and longer life spans than in the past. Daniel (1996, p. 7) states that the term "learner" now designates a role, not a person.

Many universities, including NAU, have reacted to the challenge mentioned above by adding new programs and services. Kauffman (1980) distinguishes a system from a "heap": A heap is something made up of a number of parts, and it does not matter how these parts are arranged. Graduate programs are many times offered as a heap--made up of a number of courses, and it does not matter how these courses are arranged. The educational technology faculty at the Center for Excellence in Education are concerned that these programs and services are based on a university as we've always known it in our lifetime, and that instead, we should be creating new environments that are much different than what we've known. These concerns have led us to propose a four-pronged system of professional development for inservice teachers seeking Technology Leader status: 1.) professional development certificates/credits for Arizona teachers; 2.) Technology Leader Certification for Arizona teachers; 3.) Master of Arts in Educational Technology for Technology Leaders; and 4.) a Web-based M.Ed. of Educational Technology program and a Certification program for Technology Leaders anywhere in the world. A first priority for CEE is the planning of an M.Ed. in Educational Technology for Technology Leaders in Arizona.

References

Daniel, J. (1996). Mega-universities and knowledge media: Technology strategies for higher education. London: Kogan Page.