INTRODUCTION - GUAM

Guam is the largest island in Micronesia, a region of remote small islands and atolls in the western Pacific Ocean that is larger in area than the contiguous 48 states in the United States. In 1521, Ferdinand Magellan made the first western contact with the island and its indigenous Chamorro people. As a result of the Spanish-American War, the island transferred ownership to the United States in 1898. Its strategic location near Asia, 1500 miles south of Japan, 1500 miles east of the Philippines, and 3800 miles west of Hawaii, influenced the United States to establish major military bases on the island. Guam, the largest and most developed Micronesian island, enjoys a multi-cultural, multi-ethnic, and multi-lingual community with a civilian and military population in 2011 estimated at 185,674. The population consisting of Chamorros (indigenous people), Filipinos, Caucasians, Asians, and Federated States of Micronesians, Palauans, and others – aligned with Guam's student population from different linguistic and ethnic backgrounds.[1]

GUAM COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Guam Community College (GCC) is a two-year public postsecondary career and technical education institution created by Guam Public Law 14-77 in 1977 to strengthen and consolidate career and technical education on Guam. GCC operates secondary and postsecondary career and technical education programs, adult and continuing education, community education, and short-term, specialized training programs. These programs are delivered both on and off-campus, in satellite locations, and on site at businesses.

The independent auditor, Deloitte & Touche Tohmatsu conducts annual audits of GCC as required by the U.S. Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Circular A-133. On February 27, 2012, the Independent Auditors' Report rendered an unqualified or clean opinion on GCC's financial statements for

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[1] 2012, Central Intelligence Agency, World Fact Book of the United States

Fiscal Year 2011. GCC also received an unqualified opinion on the auditor's report on Compliance and Internal Controls resulting in the independent auditor's designating the College as a "low-risk" auditee. GCC is to be congratulated for maintaining its low-risk status for the past 11th consecutive fiscal years.[2]

GOAL AND OBJECTIVES

The Guam Community College is requesting for funding of $50,000.00 for a feasibility study for its Distance Education (DE) Strategic Plan 2012. This grant is needed to achieve one goal and four objectives. The goal of this project is to be able to determine the need for distance education at Guam Community College. The objectives are (a) to determine the numbers, characteristics, and attitudes of potential users of the program, (b) to determine the capacity of DE programs for Guam, (c) to determine the college's capacity to support distance education, and (d) to develop a plan for Distance Education for implementation.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION

Over the years, colleges are adapting and continuing to adapt to the changes in the world. Most often, these changes are brought to us by technological advancements and innovation. These technological advancements have created a lot of new opportunities for the people in every walk of life. Through these advancement, colleges can make things possible in the most convenient and accessible ways. Everything seems possible in just a click of the mouse. At present, education is made possible through online delivery known as distance education.

Distance Education (DE) refers to the practice of offering educational services of instruction with support services to students who are not physically located with the individuals providing the service.

DE includes the use of computer and internet based services as well as video and audio services.

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[2] Office of Public Accountability – Guam, GCC FY 2011 Financial Highlights, February 27, 2012

Institutions use internet technologies to bring students educational programming in either synchronous or asynchronous modes. Educational interactions can be delivered through campus or off-campus educational settings.

DE can be a convenient, flexible, alternate and effective means of providing education. Nearly half of all the college students in the country are of the age group once thought of as nontraditional. They are working adults seeking educational credentials as well as training. Many working adult students with multiple demands on their time find DE to meet their needs compared to campus-based education.

DE serves as an opportunity for the college and students to contribute to environmentally friendly practices. Courses that run through DE reduce the use of paper and copying as resources are available digitally. Students commute to campus less frequently than traditional courses, lessening the use of gas and related emissions into the environment.

In addition to working adults, the traditional aged college students come to campus with extensive experience using digital technologies in their personal and school lives. For these students, DE that involves the use of internet, web cast, text messaging and other digital media is comfortable and familiar. As technology continues to expand worldwide participation in DE assists students in preparing for the workforce.

ORGANIZATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS TO IMPLEMENT THE PROJECT

The College has been the leading career and technical education institution in the region since its creation in 1977. Through its concerted efforts to meet the needs of students and employers, GCC has increased the capacity to sustain its programs, provide adequate facilities, and adopt innovative projects to enhance the College's resources as cited in the current evaluation report of ACCJC team chaired by Dr. Roland Chapdedelaine on March 19-22, 2012. "The College meets this standard of Institutional effectiveness. Ongoing, self-reflective dialog is

the central to the College's decision-making processes, especially as it relates to learning outcomes. The College's goals are widely published, with measurable objectives to help the College understand the extent to which those goals are met. The College Institutional Strategic Master Plan establishes an ongoing cycle of assessment and evaluation, use of TracDat system provides opportunities for broad-band based input. The team found that the College's process for the assessment of student learning outcomes at the course, program, certificate, and degree levels is on-going, promotes widespread dialog on the results of the assessments, and uses assessment results to improve programs and institutional processes", furthermore, the team recommends that the College develop a plan for distance education, including continuing education offered through distance education, and implement appropriate support services and procedures to deliver instruction online to further improve student programs and services".

PROJECT SIGNIFICANCE

The Guam Community College seeks to conduct feasibility study strategic plan in 2012. Distance education is the most preferred medium of education today. Many working professionals and students either do not have time to go to a traditional school to attend the classes. The growing popularity of distance education has brought about many changes. There has been a lot of development in the way of its presentation and its access. Many people who have landed up in working with different organizations without higher qualifications opt to enroll in an online program and earn a degree to enhance professional growth and development. The distance learning programs are no more the way it used to be in the past. Course materials were sent by post or by courier but now, these materials are sent online to a candidate's mail box directly. These course materials may be Microsoft word document, power point presentations or

PDF files. Moreover, in such online learning there are many benefits that a student can avail. There is a great flexibility of time and place. A student can access the course online from any place and at any time. Online classes are also provided, virtual classes arranged where in a student is provided with a user name and password. A student can log into the website of the College. It resolves the queries of the candidates. They are intimate about the timings of the virtual classes which are usually in the mornings or evenings that working professionals can attend these classes. However, there are some basic requirements that a student should have which includes basic computer knowledge, necessary software installed in the computer to open the files sent by the College, and access audio, video, and online training. Distance education in this new face of enhanced technology that has proved to be very helpful to all the candidates who find it difficult to travel long distance and attend classes in the traditional way.

PLAN OF ACTION

The college will submit a request for proposal to conduct a feasibility study to determine the need for distance education at the college. A committee of ten (10) individuals will be created to guide the process and review the progress of the project, as well as to recommend changes and improvements during the project period. Focus group will be conducted to gather information needed to develop the strategic plan. Research will be conducted on the use of existing DE courses, surveys on the current student accessibility, and identification of resource & support services to carry out the distance education plan, if applicable.

DURATION OF THE PROJECT

The feasibility study for the strategic plan on distance education will start on October 1, 2012 through June 2013. The program of activities is as follows:

Semester	Date	Purpose
Fall	October 2012	Determine the numbers, characteristics, and attitudes of potential users of the program
	December 2012	Determine the effectiveness of DE programs for Guam
Spring	January 2013	Development of an implementation plan.
	May 2013	Develop a plan for DE that will be beneficial to students, faculty and administration.
Summer	June 2013	Evaluation of Feasibility Studies Strategic Plan on Distance Education

DISSEMINATION AND PROJECT SUSTAINABILITY

The feasibility strategic plan on distance education will be presented to the college community. Based on the results of the strategic plan, the college will be guided accordingly. The initial primary concern would be the physical, financial, and human resources needed to carry out the plan. As part of the colleges accreditation processes, program reviews, to include administrative services are directly linked to planning and budgets.

TECHNICAL RESOURCES

GCC is taking these initial steps in the planning for a robust Distance Education platform and complete a three-phase network infrastructure upgrade currently underway.

DE is a major endeavor and moves GCC into another dimension of providing off campus student offerings and perhaps inter-islands offerings. DE can be a convenient, flexible, and effective means of providing education since nearly half of all college students in the country are the age group once thought of as nontraditional. They are working adults or adults seeking first educational credentials or retraining. Many working adult with multiple demand on their time find DE to meet their needs than campus-based education. GCC envisions expanding its current DE offerings and capturing this growing student market.

To support these emerging technologies and provide the path for students to traverse, GCC has in place an existing three phase network infrastructure upgrade project to increase bandwidth. This infrastructure supports the current needs of the campus, but can be expanded to support requirements if the college were to pursue an expansion of the distance education program. Additionally, to establish a roadmap to achieve a more robust DE offering, a three-phase approach is also recommended. The three-phase network and DE strategies are complimentary to each other. Any advancement in the network infrastructure improvement project positions GCC to acquire and deploy a far-reaching DE infrastructure.

EVALUATION

The office of Assessment and Institutional effectiveness will develop a survey to determine the need for the college to provide distance education, if applicable. Final report will be provided on its results. This survey will include information on the effectiveness of DE courses to ensure comparability to campus-based courses. Distance education will be evaluated through an institutionally standardized evaluation procedure which includes faculty self-evaluation, evaluation of online instruction by students, student retention, student satisfaction and evaluation of faculty member by the supervisor and when appropriate, determine comparability to campus-based programs. This process will be used to assure the conformity of DE courses and programs to prevailing quality standards in the field of DE. DE courses and programs will be consistent with the educational missions and strategic plans of the College. DE courses will follow the regular +assessment cycles and will conform to established assessment groupings.

Furthermore, DE courses must be of the same quality, accountability, and focus on student outcomes as those presented face to face. The course syllabi should demonstrate equity and quality. DE faculty members must deliver accurate and current information that aligns with courses provided

in traditional settings. Instructors must demonstrate how student work will be monitored to assure integrity. The College must ensure that the programs and courses being offered through DE are meeting the needs of the community and its students.