

News Release

Quality Management a Priority for Online Education at the U of M Crookston

By Itollefs on Friday, June 21, 2013 It has been 20 years since the University of Minnesota Crookston became the first lap top university in the country, and 12 years since the campus awarded the first online bachelor's degree. These years of experience have created a depth of knowledge in online education leading to a presentation recently on best practices at the 2013 Annual Conference of the Higher Learning Commission in Chicago, Ill., in April.

Sue Brorson, professor and head of the Business Department at the U of M Crookston was joined by Associate Professor Bruce Brorson and Assistant Professor Denis Maier for their presentation "Quality Management for Online Education: Best Practices & Implementation Challenges." The focus of the conference presentation provided background on online and quality at the Crookston campus; identified the pillars of the U of M Crookston quality system; and reflected on the lessons learned.

Maier, who serves as chair of the quality management committee, says the campus has gained a great deal of understanding about what a student needs to be successful online. "The system we have for assuring quality here is a work in progress," he says. "But, applying best practices in course design and instructional delivery while capturing performance statistics gives us a view of how both faculty and students are meeting and exceeding expectations."

The campus strives for a unique online learning experience that is at the same level of quality that on-campus students have. Online students have unique considerations: many of them must balance work and family alongside their educational pursuit. Learning online allows them flexibility to manage their time and obligations with their coursework.

Because the online students don't have the same kind of in-person access to faculty that on-campus students have, one of the highest priorities is a timely response with helpful feedback from the faculty member when students have questions. The quality management committee provides support and also mentors instructors while monitoring quality and setting expectations for faculty who teach online. The committee is comprised of four faculty members, an online advisor, and representatives from the Center for Teaching, Learning & Technology and the Center for Adult Learning.

The quest for quality is paying off. Student satisfaction is high and online growth continues to increase on the Crookston campus, but the quality management committee has no intention of resting on laurels. "Quality must be a continuous goal," Sue Brorson says. "We are committed to excellence and to our students whether they are on campus or online. We want the best learning environment and that drive to offer the best, keeps us vigilant. It takes leadership and support from the chancellor on down."

Background

Of the eleven majors offered by the Crookston campus, six of them are offered through the Business Department including accounting, management, manufacturing management, marketing, quality management, and the latest addition, finance.

Currently, planning is underway to offer the sport and recreation management major online. For more information, visit www.umcrookston.edu/online.

Today the University of Minnesota Crookston delivers 28 bachelor's degree programs, 20 minors, and 39 concentrations on campus--as well as 11 degrees online--in the areas of agriculture and natural resources; business; liberal arts and education; and math, science and technology. With an enrollment of 1,800 undergraduates from 25 countries and 40 states, the Crookston campus offers a supportive, close-knit atmosphere that leads to a prestigious University of Minnesota degree. "Small Campus. Big Degree." To learn more, visit www.umcrookston.edu.

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