

Learning at a Distance

Welcome to Boston University's Office of Distance Education.

As the nation's fourth largest private university, Boston University is the educational epicenter of one of the world's most intellectually vibrant cities.

This newsletter is a celebration of the vast achievements of the students, faculty, staff, and alumni that comprise the university, particularly the Distance Education family.

In the Distance Education News section, you will learn about the types of people who make distance learning possible. This section will also feature two particularly important players in the distance education process, giving you a little insight into their job functions and contributions.

At the Student Corner you will be introduced to a recent distance education graduate, highlighting his experiences at BU and looking at what he has been able to accomplish with the help of his new degree.

We thank you for your support and hope that this newsletter will help answer questions you may have about distance learning at Boston University.



Table of Contents

Letter from the Criminal Justice Chair.....Page 2	An Instructional What?.....Page 3
Graduation News.....Page 2	The Program Manager's Role.....Page 4
What's New Page 2	Student Corner.....Page 4
Distance Education News..... Page 3	Dates to Remember.....Page 4
Why Distance Education?.....Page 3	

Boston University: Office of Distance Education



LETTER FROM THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE CHAIR

When I look back at the development process of the Master of Criminal Justice online degree, it's hard to believe how far we've come since the Summer of 2002. I had just arrived at Boston University the previous spring. I was still finding my way around campus when Jay Halfond, Dean of Metropolitan College and John Ebersole, Associate Provost of the Division of Extended Education, approached me about an exciting and highly ambitious idea. They asked me how I would feel about developing an online graduate degree program.



I had never been involved in distance education before and the notion of offering a complete degree online was a bit daunting. Being the new kid on the block, however, I thought it was wise to go along with experienced administrators like Jay and John. We knew that there was a nation-wide need for the program to train and educate law enforcement professionals and that we had a strong curriculum and commitment to help meet that need. What I didn't know was that this would be Boston University's first online degree and that the Office of Distance Education, whose job it would be to coordinate the development and offering of this program, was also a relatively new department on campus. While Jay and John were confident of the eventual success of the program, they were putting their trust in me, the faculty, the Distance Education staff, and our partner, Embanet, to pull it off. I was enthusiastic, without really appreciating the work involved in making it happen.

Just a year and half later, we are about to honor our first graduates. Over 130 law enforcement professionals will be eligible to attend our graduation ceremonies in May 2004. I could not be prouder of these students, their families, the faculty and the facilitators who have made this program such a success. It's been a long haul for all of us, but the celebration in May will help recognize the efforts of all those involved. I am deeply gratified that we have provided so many professionals with the opportunity to continue their education while working full-time. We have also been lucky enough to attract very high caliber students to our program.

I am eager to finally meet our graduates face-to-face for the first time and know that they share my excitement in successfully completing the University's first online degree. I congratulate them all on this outstanding achievement!

**Prof. Daniel P. LeClair,
Chair of Programs
Criminal Justice, Urban Affairs & City Planning**

GRADUATION NEWS!

The 131st commencement ceremony of Boston University will be held on Sunday May 16, 2004 at Nickerson Field and will last approximately two hours.

The ceremony, which will host about 20,000 guests, will be held outdoors and will be full of special events honoring the achievements of BU's newest group of graduates.

Metropolitan College will host its graduation ceremony at 6:00 p.m. at the Track & Tennis Center located on 100 Ashford Street.

For further information on Boston University's 131st commencement ceremony and for a detailed schedule of events, please log on to: www.bu.edu/commencement/



WHAT'S NEW

Boston University Announces New Library Site for Criminal Justice Students

(Boston, MA) Starting this semester, Boston University has launched a new library site for its Criminal Justice (CJ) Students.

The newly developed site makes it easy for students to search for course materials online, providing them with access to several research databases in addition to the general library catalogue.

All registered CJ students are encouraged to log onto <http://www.bu.edu/library/eresources/crimjust.html> and to take advantage of this new resource.



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DISTANCE EDUCATION NEWS

Why Distance Education?

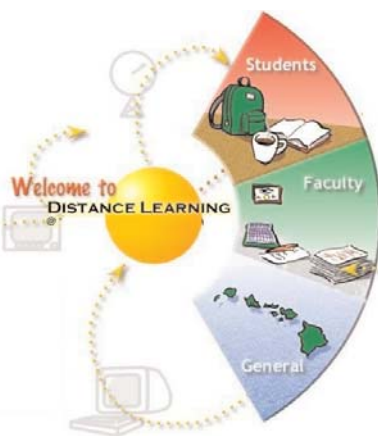
By: Naziah Lasi

Portions of the following article are excerpted with permission of the author, from the following:

Willis, B. (1994), *Distance Education - Strategies and Tools*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Educational Technology Publications.

Willis, B. (1994). *Distance Education - A Practical Guide*. Washington, D.C: International Society for Technonology in Education.

Anyone who has picked up a newspaper or watched television in the last five years knows that there is an unprecedented technological advancement in the global community today. This is particularly true for the American marketplace. Within the context of this rapid technological change and a shift towards a global political economy, the American education system is challenged to provide increased education opportunities for people in all walks of life, across the globe. Many educational institutions are answering this challenge by developing distance education programs. At its most basic level, distance education takes place when a teacher and a student who are separated by physical distance use technology (i.e. voice, video, data, and print) to bridge the instructional gap. These types of programs can provide adults with a second chance at a college education, reach those limited time, distance, or physical disability, and update the knowledge base of those who work full-time. However, the question still remains - is distance education *really* effective?



According to Dr. Barry Willis, Associate Dean of the University of Idaho Engineering Outreach department, research comparing distance education traditional face-to-face instruction indicated that teaching and studying at a distance can be as effective as traditional instruction when the method and technologies used are appropriate to the instructional tasks, when there is student-to-student interaction, and when there is timely student-to-teacher feedback. It is clear from this finding that effective distance education programs need careful planning and a focused understanding of course requirements, as well as student needs. They rely on the consistent and integrated efforts of several key players.

Key Players in Distance Education:

Students: Meeting the instructional needs of students is the cornerstone of every effective distance education program. Regardless of the educational context, the primary role of the student is to learn.



Faculty: The success of any distance education program rests primarily on the faculty. As is the case with a traditional classroom setting, the distance education instructor's role includes assembling course content and developing an understanding of student needs.

Facilitators: The facilitator acts as a bridge between the students and the instructor. To be effective, a facilitator must understand the student needs and the instructor's expectations. Most importantly, the facilitator must be willing to follow the instructions provided by the teacher.

Support Staff: These individuals are the silent heroes of the distance education enterprise. Successful distance education programs consolidate support service functions to include student registration, materials duplication and distribution, and textbook ordering among numerous others.



Administrators: Administrators work closely with technical and support staff, ensuring that technological resources are in accordance with the institution's academic mission. They maintain an academic focus while meeting the instructional needs of teachers and students. Examples of such administrative positions are the Instructional Designer and Program Manager.

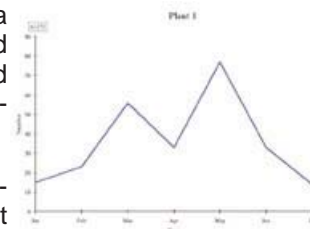
An Instructional What?

What Instructional Designers do to produce

online courses

By: Jason Gorman (Instructional Designer)

What is an instructional designer and how does he or she contribute to the creation of online courses at Boston University? If you can't answer this question, don't worry: you're not alone. Most people I meet for the first time haven't heard of instructional design (ID) either. ID is a relatively young and specialized field created by the U.S. military to rapidly train personnel. In true military fashion, they wanted to come up with a step-by-step process that could serve as a blueprint for the rapid design of any new training, regardless of the topic.



What the military established was not only a process, but also a whole new way of looking at how adults are taught. Over the past few decades, ID has evolved and been applied to every kind of educational and training situation under the sun, including higher education, corporate training, distance education, and face-to-face classes. No matter what the subject matter the function of ID is always the same: to create an optimal environment for a student to master new information, skills, and ideas. In order to optimize the effectiveness of online classes at BU, the instructional designer works closely with the professor to ensure that the objectives of his or her course are clearly attainable. Before even a single word of online text is written, the professor and the ID plan out the content, assignments, assessment methods, and visual layout of the course. Once this map has been drawn, the professor creates the raw text that the ID then edits and breaks into digestible bits of information. Also, the ID is responsible for designing audio, video, animation and other forms of multimedia to clarify key concepts.

An Instructional *What?*...continued

In a nutshell, the instructional designer is responsible for organizing the professor's ideas and information, as well as determining *how* they are communicated. The most important consideration for an ID, however, is always the student's ability to learn and apply the course's lessons. After all, the most powerful information in the world is worthless unless it can be effectively communicated.

The Program Manager's Role

By Elena Thomson



The Master in Criminal Justice (MCJ) program is Boston University's largest online program. With more than 300 students enrolled, it is quickly becoming the leader in online MCJ programs. Many factors have contributed to the program's tremendous growth and overall success. One such factor is the Program Manager (PM) whose role has become critical over the years.

Program Managers are the main point of contact for students as soon as they are accepted into the program. The PM takes on a variety of roles, including that of school administrator, registrar, school counselor, and when a little encouragement is required, mentor. Program Managers often develop strong relationships with student as they often become the student's first point of contact should they require assistance.

Going back to school can be an overwhelming experience for many students. Therefore, the Program Manager ensures that the transition is smooth and hassle free. The PM acts as the liaison between Boston University and students ensuring that they are a valued part of the school despite being off campus.

Overall, the Program Manager acts as the student's all-round support system often being turned to for advice, reassurance and motivation. From enrollment to graduation, the PM is the key to making sure the student's experience is academically rewarding, technically trouble-free and personally engaging.

DATES TO REMEMBER

Fall 2004 Course Schedule

Note: These dates are based on a 14-week semester



Classes Begin.....	September 7
Registration Deadline for Continuing, New & Transfer students.....	September 13
Registration Deadline for MET.....	September 20
Holiday, University Closed.....	October 11
Last Day to DROP classes (w/out a W).....	October 12
Last Day to DROP classes (with a W).....	October 29

For a detailed schedule of dates please log on to:
<http://www.bu.edu/reg/dfall04.htm>

STUDENT CORNER

Student Voice from Sergeant John Landfair



Q: Could you briefly tell us about the types of things you were doing prior to completing an online degree with Boston University?

A: I was working as a Detective for the Chesapeake (VA) Police Department, assigned to the Commonwealth's Attorney as his Investigator. While enrolled in the program I was promoted to Sergeant. This meant I changed from a steady 9 to 5 schedule, to one that rotated days and evenings. That made this program all the more appealing. It allowed me the flexibility to continue my education at times that were convenient for me. I wasn't restricted to a one or two nights a week class that would have meant taking leave or worse, not completing the program.

Q: Why did you choose to further your education? What drew you to the online education environment?

A: I have discovered that the two most significant avenues for change within my own agency is promotion and education. The two principle points that drew me to the program were the flexibility it offered, along with the design being geared toward working law enforcement professionals in the field. It was a great opportunity to combine real world applications to academic theory.

Q: In comparison to online degrees offered at other universities, why did you choose to come to BU? What, in your opinion, are some of the key selling points about online programs offered through us?

A: Unquestionably, Boston University's reputation was a major selling point. This is not a degree offered by some fly by night college or internet based institution. It is a real degree offered by a real accredited university. In addition, I found Boston University was one of the top 100 colleges (Money Magazine) in the country. That was a major draw.

Q: How would you evaluate the online education environment to traditional classroom time?

A: The online classroom environment had several advantages. Among them was flexibility in fitting it into my schedule along with the freedom to openly exchange ideas with other professionals. The classes were far more intensive than I first anticipated and the learning experience was not the least compromised through the online delivery. In fact, I would say I learned more because of the multi-media based format of the online learning environment.

Q: How do you think you benefited from taking online classes with us? Would you recommend these classes/programs to anyone else? Why or why not?

A: One thing I have learned in my 8 years of service to my department is that change comes through promotion and education. Boston University has given me the tools to invoke positive changes not only within my own department, but within the field of law enforcement. These changes would unquestionably be much more difficult to achieve without the degree from BU.

Q: How has pursuing an online education with BU helped you in the long run? Has it significantly changed your career objectives?

A: I am excited by the prospects and doors that this degree is opening for me. I look forward to further promotion within my own department, as well as the opportunity to formally share my knowledge and experience with others. I hope to use the extremely diverse and applicable knowledge I have gained through BU by teaching, networking and developing new programs that will positively effect change within policing in my community for the coming years.