

# **e-LEARNING REALIGNMENT REPORT**

*2/25/11 – Tom Henderson*

## **BACKGROUND**

A charge was given by Provost Brian Foster on November 1, 2010 to realign the organizational units that support the MU campus' efforts in e- Learning. Affected units included the Center for Distance and Independent Study and MU Direct as well as an associated marketing unit that is funded and supportive of their efforts. In addition, an educational technology support unit, ET@MO, has been partially supported by CDIS and MU Direct and is incorporated into this report. Its mission is to serve the educational technology needs of the campus by providing faculty support for residential and distance classes. All of these units, until November 1, had been historically administered through University of Missouri Extension or in the case of ET@MO had been initially developed and supported within Extension as the Distance Learning Design Center.

Much of my time and effort spent from November 2010-January 2011 focused on a broad range of discussions and listening sessions with faculty, academic leaders, administrators and support unit representatives that interface with these four existing units. Themes began to emerge that would influence the observations contained within this report.

In addition to the aforementioned interactions, a study of secondary information related to e-Learning was conducted with a focus on national studies or reports commissioned by such organizations as APLU, WCET, the Advisory Board Company, and the Sloan Consortium. APLU survey findings focused on national trends in areas such as faculty incentives, student life cycle issues, senior administration, academic quality and effectiveness, administrative and financial models and technology.

Finally, a significant amount of effort was expended in updating my understanding of the current organizational and business models of the existing units as well as human and financial transaction costs associated with the work of support units on campus devoted to teaching and learning at MU.

Simultaneously to those activities taking place, the appointment of a 12 person, campus-wide Task Force was made by the Provost to assist in the realignment effort. Based on information and themes gleaned from the discussions that had taken place over several months across campus, I also convened a set of five working groups to deal with the following issues:

- faculty/curricular support
- admissions/enrollments

- registration/student services/advising
- marketing/recruiting
- educational/informational technology

My observations and accompanying analyses in this report reflect the integration of the information derived from all of the input received since November 1, 2010.

## **OBSERVATION #1**

### **MU should focus its future academic and financial resources in e-learning to tomorrow's quickly emerging student.**

Until recently the historical categorization of students at institutions of higher education could more easily be captured as residential and non-residential (distance) in nature. While there continues to be a continuing strong demand on campus for students desiring a “residential experience”, the ways they prefer or need to engage teaching and learning is rapidly changing. The campus is already experiencing a transformation with residential student taking a combination of traditional face to face classroom experiences, taking a course that is heavily supported by educational technology, enrolling in a self-paced asynchronous course and possibly taking a course from another institution as needed.

This new student demographic, coupled with the growing number of place bound students at the undergraduate and graduate level that may rarely or never come to campus until graduation, calls for a need to focus MU's resources. The Task Force appointed by the Provost used a set of strategic applications identified by the Advisory Board Company's consultant, the Babson Group, to establish areas of future opportunity and focus.

Under the area of RECRUITING NEW STUDENTS, building non-peak enrollments such on-line summer offerings for undergraduate and graduate students resonated with the Task Force members. In addition, reaching new student populations such as community college transfers through 2+2 programs was seen as an area of opportunity. Serving active and reserve duty military and dependents has not been an historically strong component of MU's e-Learning strategy but newly emerging relationships in teaching and research with the military might offer an additional niche opportunity for the campus.

Under the heading of SEEKING EFFICIENCIES IN INSTRUCTIONAL DELIVERY, increasing curricular offerings in low-resource and/or low-demand degree and/or certificate areas were seen by the Task Force as an area of opportunity. Support existed for the future exploration and development of voluntary online consortia with peer institution's possessing similar academic expertise and interest. Additional support was also identified for the online

development of **voluntary**, statewide consortia appropriate to MU's mission as a research intensive, land grant institution.

INCREASING GRADUATION RATES AND SHORTENING TIME-TO-DEGREE strategies were deemed to be important to the Task Force and included online core courses for undergraduates, student-centered course redesign, the creation of more online degree completion programs and online courses to relieve pinch point classes.

Under ENHANCING THE ACADEMIC EXPERIENCE, the deployment of cutting edge pedagogy via web-mediated learning resources was deemed to be critical to our future efforts for all online students

Finally, ATTRACTING AND SUPPORTING FACULTY WITH OFF-SITE CONNECTIONS included an interest in further developing online-only faculty hires as well as support, recognition and incentives for regular faculty to participate in the creative scholarship associated with course development.

### ***SUB-OBSERVATION #1A.***

To foster the development of future online degree, certificate and course offerings in alignment with the aforementioned opportunities and the campus strategic plan, a group composed of at least the Provost, e-Learning leadership, deans of graduate and undergraduate education and college deans and faculty as appropriate should convene minimally twice a year to review MU's positioning in this area.

In summary, MU Direct (28,756) and the Center for Distance and Independent Study (11,687) supported MU academic units in the generation of 40,443 university-level credit hours of instruction in 2009-10. 42.5% of online, credit hours supported by these two units were undergraduate and 57.5% graduate respectively. In addition, CDIS, in 2009-10, cooperatively supported almost 12,500 units of secondary and elementary coursework to students in Missouri, almost every state and approximately 55 countries around the world. MU Direct has provided online support since 1989 and CDIS, by 2011, will have provided self-paced, asynchronous instructional support for 100 years, thus allowing these two support structures to be realigned to address the future strategies embraced by this campus.

## **OBSERVATION #2**

**Market analysis should be conducted to determine the feasibility of an integrated approach to day/night and summer/non-summer support and delivery of classes.**

The MU Strategic Plan, dated 11/30/10, calls for action item, 1.8, to create a seamless system of high-quality courses, certificate programs and degrees delivered through innovative and flexible delivery systems that serve the needs of all students. Included in the proposed action is a recommendation to eliminate organizational unit distinctions that will be incorporated into this document. In addition, the SPRAC plan calls for creating a single administrative and budget-driven entity to eliminate multiple delivery structures. My interactions with a broad range of faculty and administrators at different levels reflected a general concurrence that more evening class offerings will be an inevitable outcome given the growing student population. At the same time, it is apparent that to build out a focused evening “program or effort” will require a careful analysis of MU’s academic strengths and advantages, market place demographics, an examination of current providers in a mature market in Central Missouri and the interest of department and college leaders to offer more than just a set of uncoordinated courses offerings.

Recent developments of the past year now allow MU’s residential students who have logistical challenges to participating in a summer residential experience to enroll in online summer courses. Subsequent observations will be offered in this report concerning the business model to support such a new option but careful monitoring of that trend should take place to guard against any unintended enrollment consequences for summer residential courses.

## **OBSERVATION #3**

**MU should adopt a mission statement consistent with the mission statement of the MU Strategic Plan, dated 11/30/10, that reflects its aspirational goals in online/e-learning efforts. The following suggested mission statement is provided as a point for further discussion.**

“MU will extend and enhance its online resources and collaborative support in accordance with our faculty expertise and recognized academic programs throughout the campus, State of Missouri, United States and globally.”

## **OBSERVATION #4**

**MU should continue to refine and integrate its organizational support structure to reflect a model that incorporates a decentralized, academic leadership role and a single, centralized unit to support e-learning efforts on campus.**

Reorganizing and realigning the management of online education is one of the most pervasive activities being undertaken across the landscape of higher education. As reported in the 2010 MANAGING ONLINE EDUCATION SURVEY conducted by WCET's Campus Computing Project, 44% of institutions have restructured their management of online programs in the past two years, 30% have restructured in the past two years and expect to restructure again in two years, and 59% expect to restructure in the next two years.

The survey also found that budget issues (59%) and coordinating instructional resources (38%) drove recent restructuring efforts. Changing institutional leadership (35%), change in senior program official (29%) and centralizing management of online education (27%) followed as drivers of reorganization.

Finding specific, definitive institutional data is difficult to obtain when one looks for a common organizational models. There is strong anecdotal evidence of most new online efforts beginning in decentralized environments dominated by individual departments and/or colleges within a campus. As online efforts expand to support both distance and residential students, the challenges of scalability and sustainability, coupled with quality faculty and curricular support, become more important.

Some institutions have based their efforts on serving just technology mediated courses for residential students while other institutions have been rooted in serving distance students in a synchronous, semester-based environment. There appear to be far fewer institutions, such as MU, that have relatively long serving and robust support environments for online learning that encompass synchronous and asynchronous delivery to distance and residential students.

In looking for instances where a university has set about reorganizing long standing units similar to CDIS and MU Direct, I could not find any examples that realigned beyond existing units identifying the identification of a single, senior administrator to lead a reorganized effort or the implementation of new portal or website as a single entry to online resources. INTEGRATION OF BACK OFFICE FUNCTIONS FOR THE FOUR UNITS COMPOSED OF CDIS, MU DIRECT, ONLINE MARKETING AND ET@MO APPEARS TO BE A UNIQUE CHALLENGE FOR MU.

Interviews and discussions across the campus also revealed that simply recommending a new structure for online learning would represent a missed opportunity without examining the

relationship of the aforementioned units and other campus units impacted by any realignment effort. Those units include but are not limited to the Graduate School, Office of Undergraduate Studies, Enrollment Management, Information Technology, University Affairs, and the entirety of the campus' academic units.

In August, 2009, The Association of Public and Land-Grant Universities published *ONLINE LEARNING AS A STRATEGIC ASSET*. This series of benchmark volumes addressed a set of observations about successful online learning initiatives. Since APLU is largely representative of MU's peer institutions, the findings of this survey maybe more representative than some studies that studied private as well as two-year institutions of higher education. Of the seven observations cited in its executive summary, two addressed the issue of organizational constructs. They are as follows:

3. Online learning activities are strengthened by the centralization of some organizational structures that support and sustain the programs.
4. Online learning programs overseen by academic affairs units may be more readily accepted and may be more easily integrated into the fabric of the institution.

Based on the available national trend data and my understanding of the culture of the MU campus, an approach that continues to encompass an academically decentralized/administratively centralized support structure for online education appears to be appropriate model.

#### ***SUB-OBSERVATION #4A***

A single, realigned support unit encompassing CDIS, MU Direct, ET@MO and an existing Marketing Unit should be created and led by a senior administrative position within the MU Provost's office.

As supported by Babson Survey Research Group findings in 2010, online learning is becoming increasingly understood to be a strategically important effort by institutions of higher education. These findings reinforce the earlier findings previously mentioned in the 2009 APLU Report.. Among two-year institutions, the leadership for online/e-Learning is predominately lodged within CIO operations while more senior, public institutions tend to manage this strategic function within an office of academic affairs. A position of Interim Vice-Provost for e-Learning was initiated in November, 2010 and appears to be an appropriate decision to provide leadership for this core component of institutional strategic planning and implementation.

#### ***SUB-OBSERVATION #4B***

A preliminary draft of a partially constructed organizational chart is offered for consideration as a new unified structure for online/eLearning on the MU campus. See Attachment I.

An internal leadership team composed of Dr. Gera Burton, Dr. Danna Vessell, and Ms Linda Cupp was tasked by this author to provide a preliminary framework of a single, unified organizational chart to reflect the current functionalities of the aforementioned four units. I met several times with the team to vet some of the issues associated with the realignment of the units. I also intentionally asked the team to not address the issue of roles and placement of senior leadership for the model to be presented in this paper. Attachment I currently reflects organization-wide functional assignments. This approach will allow the permanent leader of this effort flexibility in the future to configure his/her senior leadership team. This organizational configuration is seen on my part as moving the e-learning effort forward while allowing new emphases efforts to support synchronous and asynchronous online learning for the future.

### ***SUB-OBSERVATION #4C***

Continue to realign and strengthen working relationships between the e-Learning unit and other units identified in the narrative language supporting OBSERVATION #4.

Attachment #2 attempts to visually reflect the points of major interaction between a new e-Learning organizational unit and those additionally critical units necessary to successfully support MU's online efforts. Rather than describing the interactions between the new unit and academic units as a wheel and spoke relationship, I have identified an environment consisting of an e-Learning support unit as a critical and central support partner positioned within and supportive of the academic units it is designed to serve.

Every national survey that I studied showed the #1 impediment to expanding institutional efforts in online learning centered on faculty resistance to online learning. Survey results indicated academic units that prepare undergraduate and graduate students for specific career paths and/or certifications embrace online learning with the most enthusiasm and effort. Likewise, on a national level, units that provide a more general degree path have been more resistant to embracing changes in modes of instructional delivery.

At MU, we need to continue to provide and expand curricular, faculty, and technological support for online efforts to create an encompassing environment. Curricular and technology related support resources for residential and distance course development and delivery does exist within ET@MO and CDIS. Realignment offers the opportunity to more closely integrate and coordinate such support at MU as it continues to grow online enrollment. Four key investments identified in the 2010 national Advisory Board study that will effectively support such a strategy are:

- increased faculty training
- robust instructional design
- special faculty compensation and
- assessment measures to address quality concerns by faculty

Those investments will require the refinement of a sustainable and scalable support model. Such a proposed model is incorporated into sub-observations 5.E&F.

#### ***SUB-OBSERVATION #4D***

As additional units and faculty avail themselves of support for online learning courses or degree/certificate programs, a single point of entry should be identified within the new organizational structure to help ascertain the goals of the academic unit, the marketability of programs under consideration and resources needed to meet the academic unit's aspirations.

At a minimum, that support team should include individuals capable of discussing the advantages and disadvantages of synchronous/asynchronous delivery, instructional support needs, and financial viability of the intended effort. A one-stop, program assessment center within the e-Learning unit to interact with academic departments, divisions, and college leaders is paramount to expansion of MU's online effort.

Attachment II is provided to visualize key, but not all, necessary interactions needed for MU to maximize its future online efforts and improve the working relationships with faculty and other support structures on campus. Five small working groups were initiated to identify some of the operational opportunities and challenges that should be addressed to maximize our future online teaching and learning efforts. In a short period of time, some opportunities and challenges within the aforementioned areas of (1) faculty/curricular support, (2) admissions/enrollment, (3) registration, student service/advising, (4) marketing/recruiting, and (5) educational/informational technology have been identified and addressed.

The greater potential for positive outcomes for work groups lies in the continuation of similarly structured forums for lateral communication across the campus between support units contributing to online learning. Value is presently being added by the various support units involved within the five work groups but lack of ongoing dialogue between well-meaning individuals results in less efficient and effective support for faculty and students.

#### **OBSERVATION #5**

##### **Modify the currently sustainable and scalable business model for MU's online learning efforts.**

As noted in an earlier section of this report, there are a myriad of online organizational structures created to serve the needs and culture of various institutions of higher education across the country.

A review of information related to business models developed to support online teaching in higher education is both limited and very general in nature. In the broadest terms, existing business models range from G.O. driven support to tuition-based revenue sharing options to hybrids of these models. A lesser adopted support model is built upon around additional tuition charges for online classes.

Despite a dearth of specific information on business models, general conclusions drawn from the Advisory Board Report indicated revenues derived from tuition sharing models typically range from 10-20% for central campus operations. In this environment, Departments/Colleges typically share revenues in the amount of 40-80% revenues and the support/service units draw down between 10-50% of the revenues.

WCET's 2010 survey on Managing Online Education indicated budget cuts and lack of key resources were the second and third largest impediments to institutional efforts to expand online education. Some information indicated that an initial infusion of campus recurring or cost-based, operating resources or third party grants were the foundation for a number of online investments in higher education. With the current revenue climate in many states and institutions, campus leaders are looking at new models for sustainability in online learning.

Unlike many of its four-year, institutional counterparts, MU through CDIS, MU Direct and its associated marketing unit have always been entirely cost based and self-supporting. ET@MO's funding is supported fairly equally between campus-based resources and support by the CDIS and MU Direct. Campus-based resources have supported the growth of online learning in our traditional classroom settings on campus.

In the existing business framework, the campus shares in revenue streams that come from MU Direct in the form of a **stated** 20% to the Office of Provost as well as an Extension indirect charge of 5.92% for off-campus credit offerings associated with a long standing Executive Order. The **stated** share rate of basic tuition for departments/colleges and MU Direct is 55% and 25% respectively. Under a series of previously negotiated decisions, **all** additional fees and tuition charged beyond the basic undergraduate and graduate tuition rate is returned to the academic units. ITF fees of \$12.20/credit hour are also entirely returned to the campus in addition to the aforementioned tuition splits and supplemental fees.

With differing allowed tuition charges associated with different academic programs over the past year, the **effective** split of revenue sharing from one academic unit to another one ranged from 55-83.5% for an overall average split of 61.3%. An overall **effective** share to campus operations was approximately 18.5% and MU Direct's **effective** share was approximately 20.2% respectively.

CDIS has operated a different financial model based on the need for intensive front-end investment costs associated with the development of curriculum that is self-paced and self-directed in approach. CDIS, along with MU Direct, has transferred revenues to the campus in

the same (5.92%) indirect percentage amount called for in the Executive Order. Currently, CDIS engages and pays MU faculty to develop a self-paced and directed course(s) for delivery to university students as well as elementary and secondary students. A faculty member is paid on an extra compensation basis but compensation must be approved by the faculty member's approving academic administrator. At the present time there is no departmental or college revenue share for the development or delivery of the course. At times, CDIS has paid for development costs to an academic unit where courses were created for a certificate or course sequence.

#### ***SUB-OBSERVATION #5A***

MU should initiate a stated 15% share to the campus from the combined, university-based tuition charges currently supported by the two existing units in lieu of the current model of transfers and indirect charges.

This recommendation would put central administration's revenue share in the midpoint range of known university models that rely on revenue sharing models and would also still be in the upper to mid-range of a consortia example such as the Great Plains Idea where central administration shares by individual institution range from 0-17%.

#### ***SUB-OBSERVATION #5B***

MU should initiate a stated 60% revenue share of tuition charges with academic departments for courses developed and delivered through synchronous, semester based delivery to distance students.

This observation would still incorporate the existing agreement parameters dated 03/03/09, concerning additional revenues beyond basic undergraduate and graduate tuition charges and supplemental fees. This revenue sharing relationship also appears to be in the midrange of revenues recovered within MU's existing consortia agreements.

#### ***SUB-OBSERVATION #5C***

Initiate a 20-80% sharing model between academic units and faculty respectively in the development process for an asynchronous, self-paced university course supported by the realigned e-Learning.

This observation reflects a new incentive for academic units to become more actively involved in the creative and development process for self-paced instruction while preserving an understanding of the particularly intensive faculty role in this form of online instruction.

### ***SUB-OBSERVATION #5D***

The e-Learning unit will continue to offer competitive rates for faculty to manage the delivery of a asynchronous, self-paced course and serve as the instructor of record while sharing a tuition revenue stream of 20% of tuition with the faculty member's academic department.

### ***SUB-OBSERVATION #5E***

From existing balances within the new e-Learning unit, it should create an initial degree/certificate, course development fund in the amount of \$1.50-1.75 million to address the highest priorities identified by the e-Learning Task Force within OBSERVATION #1.

### ***SUB-OBSERVATION #5F***

To sustain and scale the development of future e-Learning efforts, a commitment to set aside 10% each of the ITF and campus resources derived from e-Learning efforts would be incorporated into the funds identified in Sub-Observation #5E. The specific purpose of this investment would be for online support of faculty, curriculum and technology development. I would estimate the annual level of funds to initially amount to approximately \$40,000 and \$200,000 respectively. Financial support for this sub-observation would obviously grow or contract in proportion to MU's success in online learning. These funds would be incorporated in the fund created in sub-observation #5F.

## **OBSERVATION #6**

**MU should adopt "Mizzou Online" as the brand name for its e-learning efforts in the future.**

With realignment of online/e-Learning efforts on campus to encompass a single support structure, the importance of branding the effort is critical. This name has collectively been used in a central web site for the past several years by both CDIS and MU Direct. The working group on recruiting and marketing was asked to consider the possibilities for identifying a future brand.

The word, Mizzou, was clearly thought to be the key in identifying the campus in the marketing arena. A number of institutions have adopted words such as digital, world campus, outreach, e-Learning, etc. as part of the range of choices to describe its efforts. By reading this report it is easy to see the language moves back and forth between e-Learning and online learning. While e-learning language seems to currently resonate within the academy, the maximum understanding of the student learner seems to be the most important factor in brand recognition. MIZZOU ONLINE as a brand encompasses the broad understanding of serving a distance as well as a residential student audience as well as being straightforward. As noted in working group discussions, the involved parties must understand that the term, MIZZOU, is less recognizable

and may not resonate with prospective, international students and specific search engine protocol will need to be supported to lead students in particular from Mizzou to the University of Missouri campus.

Continuing to use the term, MIZZOU ONLINE, as a brand, will also save additional resources required to establish a new customer understanding of MU's e-Learning efforts.

## **OBSERVATION #7**

**The realignment effort that encompasses four existing support units should include as much consolidation of physical space as possible.**

The four separate units are currently housed in mostly non-contiguous space across the campus. Consolidation of space would ideally allow the new consolidated support unit to assimilate back office functions in the areas of student services, accounting, program development, editing, curriculum and administrative support. More importantly, physical consolidation would simplify access by faculty and walk-in students in a single stop for face to face service.

## **OBSERVATION #8**

**Specific effort needs to be undertaken to communicate amended UM language related to intellectual property rights for course materials.**

CDIS and MU Direct do not currently have a common operational document in place to describe the intellectual and copyright policy related to on-line studies and technology mediated courses. As these offices are realigned into a single support unit, there should be one document created that describes the ownership of rights for internal use as well as external use of educational materials and courses with third parties. MU currently operates in this area under Chapter 100.030 of the Collected Rules of the University of Missouri. The Collected Rules as they relate to copyright regulations were amended 6-11-10 but specific language related to course materials must be accessed at <http://www.umsystem.edu/ums/aa/faculty/faqs-IPcoursematerials>.

In addition to creating language that describes the appropriate rights of the involved parties within the campus, a front loaded process with accompanying agreement papers should be created for the protection of MU, faculty, its academic units and the eLearning unit involved in the development and delivery of eLearning courses, modules, etc. Several additional examples of documents to support copyright agreements and associated processes are available in a 2010 document entitled, ENGAGING FACULTY IN ONLINE EDUCATION by the Education Advisory Board.

## **OBSERVATION #9**

**Beginning July 1, 2011, all classes developed and offered to residential and non-residential students served in a synchronous and asynchronous e-learning environment should be incorporated into the proposed e-learning business model. The aforementioned action would result in those classes and students being incorporated into the proposed revenue sharing model contained in Observation #5.**

From the onset of their creation on the MU campus, MU Direct and CDIS were tasked to serve an audience of distance students and operate in a self-sufficient, enterprise driven model. Different models of revenue generation and sharing were developed over differing periods of time but all revenues were understood to be net new resources to be shared by the academic departments, faculty, support units and the campus.

As the nature of student learning and life style changes have emerged, these units increasingly have been asked to be engaged in support of **residential** students in areas such as (1) online summer courses, (2) independent study courses for students who need different choices to access MU courses or (3) special situations when students need a course to graduate and not otherwise offered in a regular, semester-based offering or (4) to complete a degree program after many years away from MU.

Differing business model approaches for an increasing number of “special situations” have emerged in a confusing array of challenging situations for residential students and academic units as well as these support units. The classic conundrum is how to accommodate the online needs of a “newly” emerging set of residential students supported within what has been a business model originally configured to serve only distant students. The aforementioned observation recognizes that our present People Soft based registration system does not differentiate between distance students registered in residential class sections and residential students registered in distance class sections, thus separate class sections must be artificially created to accommodate the current business model. Registering all online students in the same manner will no longer require the creation of different section for residential and distance students.

Long term, implementation implications for the treatment of online, residential students is harder to predict than the trajectory of future growth patterns for non-residential students. For that reason, the following observation is included.

## **OBSERVATION #9.1**

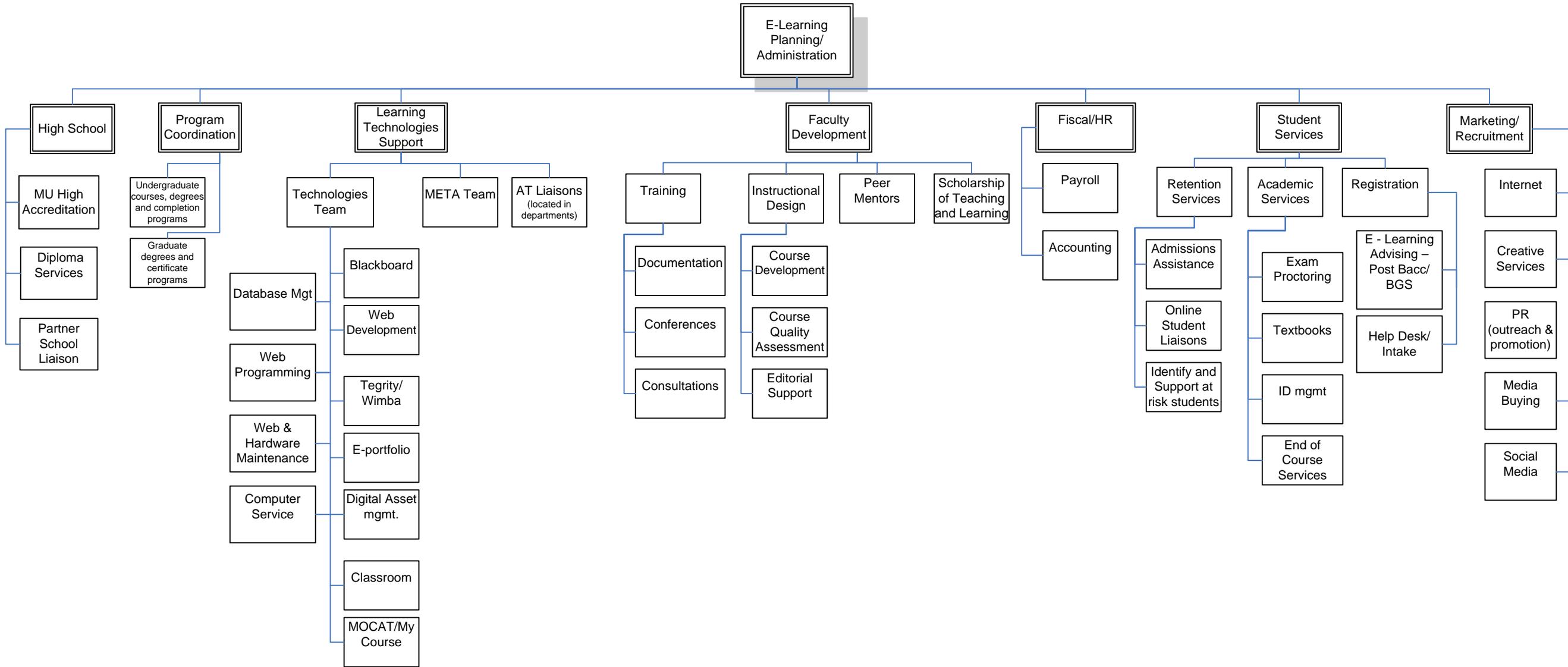
**Within three years, MU administration should evaluate the presently proposed business model in terms of its efficacy and fairness for all parties. A particular sub-focus should include the model's impact on support of residential students and resource allocation for all parties.**

Given the changing external and internal environments within higher education, it is prudent to continuously reassess the business model assumptions currently in place or proposed for the future of e-Learning efforts.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

With the constantly and rapidly changing environment of e-Learning in higher education, it is problematic to identify the perfect organization and sustainable model of operation. In looking at the lessons learned summary of the recent Advisory Board and other national studies, I believe the observations contained in this document are consistent with those findings while reflecting the history and culture of the MU campus and its 100-year history of providing education beyond the physical boundaries of this institution.

In my mind, there is no perfect model to be deployed in this realignment. For that reason, I have called for a review of the model and associated observations within three years. For those individuals anchored in a need for permanency, this final observation may be disconcerting. At the same time, the external forces in play at national and state levels in terms of the funding of higher education do not provide the luxury of foregoing future looks at MU's student composition, academic programs and processes while maintaining its basic mission in service to students and the state.



ATTACHMENT # 2

E-LEARNING RELATIONAL PARTNERSHIP MODEL

