Estrella Mountain Community College
Innovation of the Year Proposal
March 2010

"ONLINE ADJUNCT FACULTY ORIENTATION"
AT ESTRELLA MOUNTAIN COMMUNITY COLLEGE

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With contributions by Terri Propes, Jennifer Means, Michael Powell, and Other Adjunct Faculty

Quality: The online orientation provides adjuncts with the foundation and ongoing resources to promote success in a learning college. Knowledgeable Estrella Mountain faculty and staff from across campus contributed to the content that includes:

- general college information, covering main functional areas i.e. Financial Aid, Disability Resources, and Student Services
- classroom-specific information,
- professional development
- basic resources, such as information and help with email, help desk, library, and Adjunct Faculty Association
- Student Information System, with step by step instructions for accessing rosters and entering grades
- information on Learning College initiatives
- college and District Wide forms/acknowledgements

The quality of the online orientation is evidenced in many ways. Instructional division chairs have given positive feedback at Academic Issues Team meetings on a regular basis. Some chairs forward emails from their adjuncts with positive comments. The orientation is a tool used by many division chairs in their face to face orientation sessions that they hold for adjuncts prior to the start of each semester. One of the division chairs gives assignments to adjuncts; adjuncts complete the assignment using the online orientation then submit the assignment back to the chair.
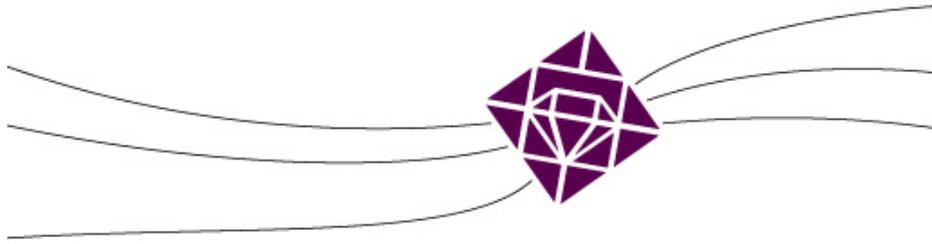
Adjunct Faculty Listening Sessions were conducted in Spring Semester, 2010. One question asked was, *"Have you used the online orientation? How did you find it?"* Examples of responses to this question included:

> *"I think it's great. It would have been helpful if it would have been in place when I started at Estrella. It's easy to use and concise."*
> *"I really appreciate the online adjunct faculty orientation because it gives me an accessible source of information when I need it or if others ask me questions that I am unable to answer. I have used it a few times late at night at home to clarify in my mind certain procedures or processes that I need to follow on the campus."*
> *"It's very helpful."*
> *"WOW! There is so much information there that I couldn't think of anything that wasn't. The site is easy to use, too."*

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Other comments are recorded in the Listening Sessions minutes.

Adjuncts attending the Adjunct Faculty Professional Learning Community state the orientation is useful. They also direct their peers to the site when other adjuncts have questions.

The Online Adjunct Orientation is improved and updated on a regular basis based on feedback. Examples of the continuous improvement include adding quizzes to the end of each section. Visitors to the site are able to test their knowledge of the material presented with a short quiz. Those who pass may print a certificate for their records and for their division chair. Division chairs want evidence of this accountability.

Quality is also evidenced by Paradise Valley Community College being influenced by Estrella's orientation, and by Mesa Community College requesting a copy to adapt to their campus. (See *Replication*)
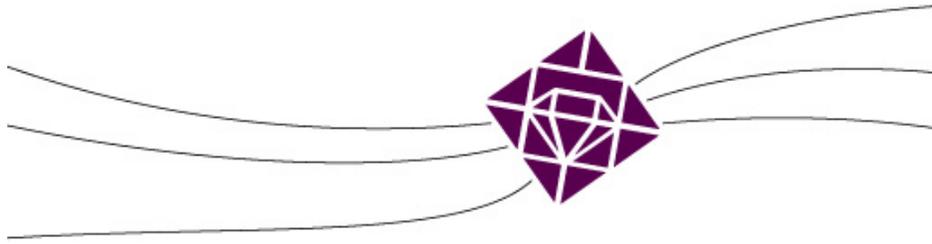
Efficiency: The online format streamlines the adjunct orientation by having all essential information in one place. At Estrella Mountain, adjuncts teach approximately 60% of the course sections. It was difficult finding a time for all adjunct faculty to meet in a face-to-face orientation. Prior to developing the orientation, Adjunct Forums were held on the Saturday preceding each semester but attendance dwindled over time. Division chairs also started taking ownership of orienting their adjuncts – they held meetings at the beginning of each semester to cover policies and procedures, thus adding yet more time. The online format increases efficiency by making the best use of everyone's time. It is available 24/7 as an initial and continued resource for new and returning adjunct faculty.

The orientation is web-based, and as such, updates are easier than with revising and printing hard copies. Any member of the online orientation working group (four members) can make changes.

Google Analytics is being used to track usage. It shows the number of pageviews (instance of a page being loaded by a browser), the unique pageviews (aggregates pageviews generated by the same user during the same session; represents the number of sessions during which that page was viewed one or more times), and the average time on each page. Reports received on a weekly basis show that the time spent on each page has increased. Most usage is toward the beginning of each semester, but it continues throughout the semester as well. For the week of January 25 – January 31, 2010, there were 320 pageviews and 206 unique pageviews. The average time on each page ranged from less than one minute to three and one half minutes which seems reasonable depending on content.

Cost Effectiveness: The online reference saves numerous resources each semester. When Adjunct Forums were held, Professional Staff Grade 10 and Grade 8 spent two to three weeks preparing for the event. Letters of invitation to the forum were mailed to the entire adjunct faculty listing (359 letters in Spring 2009 via priority mail; approximately $144). Packets for 100 were prepared with copies of all materials (approximately 20 pages, $160).

Food costs toward the Forums totaled approximately $1225 for continental breakfasts, lunch and drinks. On the day of the event, overtime (or compensatory time) for Professional Staff and earnings for Temporary Staff totaled approximately $870. (5 Professional Staff, 6 overtime hours @ $25.00 /hour = $750; 2 Temporary Staff, 6 hours @ $10.00/hour = $120)

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At a minimum, costs for *two* Adjunct Forums per year totaled $4798. With the current online format, an adjunct is on contract for approximately 20 hours/year, for a total cost of $530, to maintain the site. This represents a *minimum savings* of $4268.

Other costs not reflected in the above savings include five hours time spent in the forums for approximately seven division chairs, two faculty directors, four evening supervisors, eight administrators, six student services personnel (total man hours = 135), and of course adjunct faculty time.

Note that costs for any contracts for faculty presenting at the Adjunct Forum, administrative costs, or facilities were not considered in these costs.

In addition, the orientation alleviates some of the workload and stress on the adjunct office staff and division secretaries in answering day to day operational questions from adjunct faculty.

Replication: The Online Adjunct Orientation is easily replicated. Last year Estrella's Faculty Director of the Center for Teaching and Learning demonstrated the Online Orientation at the District Faculty Staff Development Meeting. Paradise Valley Community College liked Estrella's format and layout, e.g., the roadmap concept, and developed an adjunct orientation that was influenced by Estrella's. Mesa Community College has asked to replicate the orientation which is possible using SoftChalk or another web authoring tool. During Spring Semester, 2010, Estrella is piloting the orientation in Blackboard which will make it possible for Estrella to copy the information to another college's institution content folders in just a matter of minutes. Other colleges do not have to re-create the content since it is easily customized to each college.
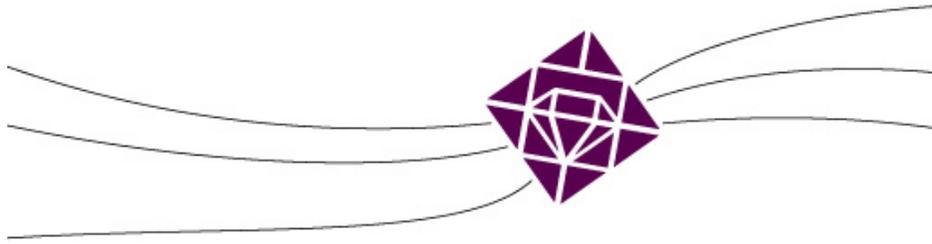
The Math, Physics and Engineering Division is piloting the orientation in Blackboard. Thus far positive comments have been received. With Blackboard, divisions can customize the orientation to fit their needs, such as by posting copies of syllabi used in different classes. General changes made by a member of the online orientation working group would automatically be reflected in each division.

Creativity: Online adjunct orientations certainly are not new and are a best practice for supporting adjuncts. Estrella Mountain is the only Maricopa College to have an interactive orientation website encompassing all resources for adjunct faculty to be successful in the classroom. The orientation was created using SoftChalk and has two pathways. Adjuncts can read the pages sequentially, or follow the Roadmap, in which the topics are arranged chronologically.

By developing the orientation in SoftChalk, faculty are introduced to a different technology that they could use in the classroom.

Timeliness: Since attendance at the face to face Adjunct Forums had decreased, the online orientation was timely since adjuncts need critical information. The online format took advantage of technology for information on demand; it is a 24/7 resource.

This was also timely for adjuncts hired shortly before the start of a semester. They are no longer disadvantaged by not attending an in-person orientation for they can go online and become familiar with EMCC operations and teaching expectations even if they are hired a day before they start teaching.

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The online orientation was piloted during the 2008 - 2009 academic year with full implementation in August 2009.

Learning: The online orientation demonstrates learning in various ways, especially important for an institution on the journey to becoming a learning college. First and foremost, faculty need to be oriented so they can best serve their students. Adjunct faculty learn from each other – often they will ask each other questions and find the information together in the orientation. Quizzes have been added at the end of each section to assess if the adjunct has grasped the information. There is instant feedback for the user regarding whether or not their answers were correct. Blackboard allows division chairs to monitor how each adjunct performs on the quizzes.

The increased number of pageviews on Google Analytics does not actually document learning, but generally the increased amount of time spent on each page would be correlated with increased learning.

The orientation benefits students by ensuring adjuncts are ready to teach on the first day of class (e.g., completing FERPA, printing rosters, creating syllabi, understanding services provided by Learning Support and Student Services). This means that learning will occur on *day one* of classes.

As noted above, the Faculty Director for the Center for Teaching and Learning demonstrated Estrella's orientation at a district meeting. Thus far, Paradise Valley Community College developed an orientation influenced by Estrella's. The orientation will also be copied to Mesa Community College's institution content folders in Blackboard.

Collaboration: Creating the orientation was truly a collaborative process. Persons involved include adjunct faculty, the Adjunct office staff, Information Technology, Student Services, Division Chairs, residential faculty, Center for Teaching and Learning, Academic Affairs Administration, and Estrella Mountain representatives of the Adjunct Faculty Association.

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