

## Distance Education

### Course Introduction

For over 100 years distance education has been society's answer to bridging the gap of time and space and connecting students with teachers when they, for a variety of reasons, cannot be in a traditional, face-to-face learning environment together. For that same amount of time, we have learned that students can learn at different times and different places from the instructor. Simonson (2003, as cited in Albright, Simonson, Smaldino & Zvacek, 2012, p. 8) says this type of asynchronous distance education approach is the purest form of distance education because learners get to choose when and where they learn. Although this is not the only type of distance education approach we will be studying, it is helpful to understand, that in its most basic form, learners continue, decade after decade, to successfully learn through distance education programs.

Effective distance education programs do not just happen by chance however. They are carefully planned with a direct focus on the needs of the learner, the instructional goals for the course and the goals of the organization administering the program. Effective distance education programs evolve over time through the constant effort of many dedicated individuals in an organization. These dedicated stakeholders, students, teachers, instructional designers, administrators, tutors, facilitators, and skilled support staff are what keeps a successful distance education program in a position to continue bridging the space and time between the learner and the instructor.

### Course Objectives

This course was designed to create opportunities for you to learn about the subject of distance education from several perspectives and also be able to apply this knowledge in your own life. Education is very personal in terms of needs and interests. You will find in this course many opportunities for you to personalize your work and / or make choices about which direction to take an assignment. Although the course and the assignments are presented the same way to all students, what you do with the assignments and how you apply your knowledge will be up to you. You are expected to be creative in your work. At each step in the course, think of how the information best suits your learning goals. When you complete this course you will have accomplished the following:

1. Widen your perspectives about distance education.
2. Synthesize distance education trends into a cohesive plan of your own that answers an organization's instructional needs/goals and/or solves instructional/learning problems.
3. Identify and assess several different technologies that assist in the delivery of distance education courses (telecommunications technologies) as well as instructional technologies that help encourage learning in individual distance education lessons.
4. Distinguish the instruction and support needs of learners of various backgrounds, in a variety of contexts and relate these to the planning process.
5. Evaluate distance education modules/courses/lessons in a variety of contexts.
6. Analyze and create assessments specific to distance education environments.
7. Create strategies that address the learning needs of a variety of learners.