STARTING AN ONLINE PROGRAM
THE NUTS AND BOLTS

BACKGROUND

- Robin Ament & Tony Seikel
- Communication Sciences and Disorders

- Two programs currently online (and a third in process)
  - Will talk about development, then funding, and then clinic implementation

- MS SLP Online (around 60 Graduate credits)
  - Entering its 3rd year (graduating its first class)
  - Currently nearly 45 students nationwide

- Certificate Online Preprofessional (around 30 UG credits)
  - Currently in its 8th year, with about 90 students per year

- Online Sign Language Interpreting
  - In development
THE COMPONENTS OF A SUCCESSFUL ONLINE IMPLEMENTATION

From Kathleen Kangas, our Chair:

A successful online program arises as a result of having...
1. a Visionary
2. a Pragmatist
3. Technology support (thank you, ITRC!)
4. A strong and dedicated faculty
5. An engaged support staff
6. A financial plan
7. A commitment to the program and quality education

OUR FIRST CONVERSION: ONLINE PREPROFESSIONAL PROGRAM (OPP)

• Not necessarily a religious experience!
• Needs assessment
  • Idaho workforce needs (Directors of Special Ed were pretty grumpy with us)
• Phase-in
  • Over course of 3 years (about 4 courses converted per year)
  • Course development funds
    • TIG grants: 2 course buyout per course developed (around $6,000 to faculty member)
    • Funded conversion of around 13 courses
    • Faculty who “owned the course” typically developed it
    • Course belongs to department (faculty are paid to develop course)
ONLINE SPEECH-LANGUAGE PATHOLOGY MASTER’S DEGREE PROGRAM (OSLP)

- Significantly more involved
- Traditional program: ~40 credits, 6 semesters (2 years, including summers), clinical experience
- Online Program: ~40 credits, 9 semesters (3 years, including summers), clinical experience
- Academic component:
  - Similar model: course conversions of existing materials
  - Conversion by content experts on faculty (some outside converters)
  - Courses belong to department, but faculty have first rights of refusal for teaching the courses

MONEY

- Here’s our model:
  - Significant use of “special course fees” and ultimately Program fees
  - Special course fees allowed us to pay instructors
  - Ultimately, OPP had to be funding source for department
  - By design, OPP is “infinitely” expandable....can handle any number of students (keep ready pool of faculty for courses)
FEE STRUCTURE FOR OPP

• Need to make sure that everyone gets paid for what they do.
  • Instruction: section size limit \( n = 15 \)
    • Faculty get full pay for first section (~$1100/credit) + ~$500 per section thereafter
    • Currently \( n = 90 \) for many courses, so 5-6 sections
    • Needed \( n = 6 \) students per section to break even
  • Course conversions:
    • Full course conversion = $5,000
    • Significant revision = $1,500
    • Minor revision = $500

FEE STRUCTURE FOR OSLP

• More complex
• Is "break-even" model (i.e., we spend as much on it as we make)
  • 3 faculty salaries and all other program costs
  • Same faculty compensation as OPP
• Fewer sections (typically 1)
  • Option to have non-major sections...
  • Typically part of faculty workload as opposed to overload
  • Clinical component...as Robin will describe
SUMMARY

• Find a niche
• Build a business plan to see how much it will cost, and how much you can make
  • I always assume program must be self-sustaining
• Find the money for conversion:
  • As Deep Throat said “Follow the money.” (All the President’s Men)
  • Borrow?
• Market your program
  • Not just USA!
• Make sure faculty have a reason to want to keep teaching the courses

ROBIN!