
STUDENTS SEEKING KNOWLEDGE



A Proposal:

Old Dominion University Teletechnet MA English Program

Submitted to:

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Executive Summary

Old Dominion University has been delivering quality distance education since 1985. From the original Bachelor's Degree in Nursing to the 28 undergraduate and eight graduate degree programs available today, Old Dominion University affords both traditional and non-traditional students the opportunity to pursue college degrees not otherwise obtainable.

Very diverse students seek distance education classes to expand their knowledge, learn new skills, enhance their career opportunities, and increase their earnings. We hypothesize that present IDS Professional Communication undergraduate students will consider continuing their education via Teletechnet if a Master of Arts in English with a Concentration in either Professional or Creative Writing is offered. Further, Old Dominion University will benefit by being one of the first institutions to offer this proposed program through a synchronous, interactive media.

To support our rationale, we interviewed four faculty members (see Appendixes D through H) and found that all four would teach Teletechnet classes if combined with alternatives that would allow for more interaction. We interviewed businesses (see Appendixes I through L) and found that nine out of 12 would sponsor one to two employees in the program. We surveyed students (see Appendixes M and N) and found that six out of 13 respondents were interested in the degree. We researched present enrollment (see Appendix C) in Old Dominion University's graduate-level English courses and found that only one-fifth of the English department's current classes are 90 percent full and overall the courses are only about two-thirds full.

Additionally, we researched alternative delivery methods and found that these methods can enhance interactions between faculty and students and between students. We researched other distance education programs and did not find any colleges or universities offering MA English degrees with a professional writing concentration.

The group recommends further research to investigate why MA Creative Writing but no MA Professional Writing programs are offered, to learn whether or not instructor's preferences for delivery modes might or might not influence offerings, to explore whether or not existing V-Tel systems can be used, to determine if the 34 to 38 percent vacancy rate applies to past semesters as well, and to survey

Teletechnet site staffs to ascertain how an additional program may impact them.

Terry Ewell, Charles Iden, Barbara Stagner, and Sherril Stinnett envisage a market for holders of graduate degrees in English, and we envisage a market for the degree itself. As representatives of undergraduate IDS Professional Communications students, we present this proposal for a Teletechnet Master of Arts English program to Dr. Joyce Neff, Associate Department Chair of the Department of English at Old Dominion University to determine its merits and its feasibility from an educational improvement and marketability standpoint.

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I. Introduction

A. Overview of Audience & Authors

The writers of this proposal, Terry Ewell, Charles Iden, Barbara Stagner, and Sherril Stinnett represent a number of undergraduate Professional Communications students who are interested in continuing their graduate studies at Old Dominion University. We submit this proposal for a Teletechnet Master of Arts English program to Dr. Joyce Neff, Associate Chair of the Department of English at Old Dominion University, in the hope that she will carefully consider the merits of this proposal and consider its presentation to the remainder of the English faculty for their perusal and consideration. Further, we hope that the English Department will delve deeper into the subject and eventually present the evidence of the program's feasibility to Old Dominion University administration and gain their approval and support for implementation.

B. Distance Education - A Brief History

Distance learning traces its roots to the year 1873, when Anna Ticknor created the Society to Encourage Studies at Home. She created this society to help educate Boston women across class boundaries. Lessons were taught and completed by mail correspondence.

In 1969, Britain established the Open University (OU). OU is the largest and most innovative educational organization in the world. It is the leader in large-scale applications of technology to facilitate distance learning.

In 1971, and following the traditions of Britain's Open University, New York's Empire College opened. In 1985, Old Dominion University formed a partnership with Eastern Shore Community College to offer bachelors degree in Nursing. Much like Anna Ticknor's program, Old Dominion University's Teletechnet program was developed to bring education to those who may not otherwise be able to attend college classes.

Teletechnet was expanded through the Virginia General Assembly in 1993. Teletechnet's purpose (17) is as stated:

1. To provide higher education access to students who are unable to move to the home campus of one of Virginia's colleges and universities because of employment or marital status, distance or expense.
2. To provide a cost-effective means to serve 12,000 of the 65,000 additional students who will seek to enter the Commonwealth's colleges and universities by the year 2000, and,

3. To stimulate economic development in areas of the Commonwealth where there is a demonstrated shortage of highly trained employees in critical occupations such as engineering and nursing.

Old Dominion University states they are "...a national leader in the field of technology-delivered distance learning...committed to providing academic programs to a diverse national and international population. The University seeks partnerships and alliances that will facilitate delivering those programs to place-bound students" (8).

Since the program's inception, over 2200 students have earned degrees in one of Teletechnet's twenty-eight undergraduate or eight graduate programs, with 8,718 out of Old Dominion University's 20,100 students being distance-learning students, according to Edith Fields in the Distance Learning Office at Old Dominion University.

According to the National Center for Educational Statistics, 10 percent of all graduate students and 8 percent of all undergraduate students in the United States are distance-learning students (11).

Nova Southeastern University in Florida launched the first online degree program in 1983, and today, 89 colleges have entered the arena, according to a report in U.S. News (15). Cisco Systems, provider of end-to-end networking solutions, indicates that global education business has surpassed \$2.2 trillion, and the demand for higher education will reach 160 million by 2025, creating 40 million potential distance education students (5).

II. The Way We See It

A. About Students

Most of Old Dominion University's undergraduate distance-learning population consists of hard-working men and women who have families and fulltime jobs with which to contend. These students are pursuing degrees in various fields in order to earn more money and increase their quality of life. They cannot follow the traditional learning schedule of daytime classes. Many of them live in rural areas, where the nearest college, in some cases, is hundreds of miles away. These students seek classes that are compatible with their busy schedules.

Upon completion of their undergraduate studies, some students are content with their degrees and they will continue on to higher paying jobs and increased status. Others wish to continue with their studies, but find themselves in the same predicament they were in when they started their undergraduate work. With family and work roles to

balance, they are not afforded viable options to continue their education.

Undergraduate Professional Communication students wishing to pursue an advanced degree in English do so in order to increase their marketable skills in their chosen field. While distance learning graduate programs offer many students the opportunity to improve their quality of life and their earning potential, students who wish to earn a MA English degree find that their options are severely limited after graduation. Currently, only a handful of colleges offer a distance learning English program. Students who wish to pursue their education past the graduate level are forced to enroll in other programs that may not suit their preferences, or they have to enroll in a residency program, if there is one available nearby.

B. About Costs

We are aware that distance education is expensive. For instance, Cisco Systems estimates the average amount spent by each institution offering distance learning in 1998 was around \$129,000 (5). The figure includes costs for communications paraphernalia, hardware, and software, but excludes staff salaries. The American Federation of Teachers estimates that infrastructure costs for strictly online courses at \$25 million, while a single course can cost up to \$1 million to develop (10).

The group is also cognizant of the affects that recent Commonwealth of Virginia budget cuts have had on higher education. The cuts have affected appropriations for Teletechnet student services, staff, and faculty hiring and pay increases, and the procurement of technological equipment needed for course delivery, according to some instructors (11 and 13). For instance, the University has closed two distance sites and slashed marketing monies (3). In addition, graduate programs are funded mainly through endowments and tuition with very little public monies, since the state is reluctant to fund what benefits only a few students (11). Therefore, a new graduate program delivered at a distance faces special financial challenges for students and the University, as a program like this would need either more funding from the state, which does not exist in light of the budget cuts, or from private contributors, such as from businesses and charitable foundations.

We also understand that enrollment plays a large part in overcoming the financial obstacles associated with implementing new programs of study. Generally, enrollment positively correlates with the amount of money available to fund programs. However, to our knowledge, there has been no firm research conducted that indicates student interest in a Master of Arts English program from a distance. Without this indicator,

the University would have difficulty justifying the implementation of the proposed program.

C. About Faculty

The group has also become aware of faculty member concerns (9, 11 13, and 16) about distance education for graduate degree-seeking students including:

- Limited community due to unrestricted class sizes and the inability to give students individualized attention,
- Limited accessibility between student and instructor,
- The lack of face-to-face and one-on-one interaction,
- Disruption of continuity (course progression from same institution with consistent view of student by faculty),
- Intensive preparation time and greater demand for after-class hours, and
- Lack of rewards in relation to time and effort required.

III. Exploring the Possibilities

We have set out to explore the various aspects of the above issues and problems, in order to understand them, and to suggest creative solutions that meet student and University needs and goals. We will suggest ways in which courses and the proposed program may be effectively administered in order to ensure that students have valuable interaction with their professors and peers. We will explore alternative delivery methods, including low-residency requirements consisting of a faculty mentor element, and video conferencing software, such as CUseeMe, Microsoft Net Meeting, and V-Tel.

In addition, we will discuss the implications of our research findings, which have resulted from surveying Old Dominion University undergraduate students; interviewing Old Dominion University faculty and administrators, businesses, and other universities; research on enrollment in current Old Dominion University graduate-level English courses; and research about trends and growth in distance education.

Our goal is to put this information into the context of implementing a distance graduate English program. We hope that our findings and presentation will convince our audience to disseminate the report to the Old Dominion University English Department where it may induce further exploration of a possible Master of Arts English program.

IV. Rationale

A. Advantages to Teletechnet

Teletechnet provides certain advantages, according to faculty interviews (9, 11, 13, and 16), including:

- Exposure of instructor and students to a wider audience that enriches the classroom,
- Potential for greater diversity in the classroom,
- Additional world experience results from distance learners' age ranges,
- A more focused learning process,
- Enables the instructor to use a greater variety of media for teaching, and
- Allows the student to gain experience in using electronic media.

B. Alternative delivery methods

Preliminary internet research reflects a distinct need for a program that is both distance education in nature and interactive, as most available programs are entirely online, and do not offer the desired interaction between instructor and student. Warren Wilson College and the University of Hawaii are the exceptions, for they do require a low-residency program. Some instructors we interviewed feel that less-desirable delivery methods include video streaming, videotapes, or web-based classes these delivery methods do not allow for as much interaction between instructors and students.

However, because of technological advances in video conferencing, we believe there are several viable options that can enhance the Teletechnet experience, giving students and professors the necessary means to interact with one another. The most desirable alternative delivery methods proposed include Teletechnet combined with a low-residency requirement and videoconferencing software, such as CUseeMe, Microsoft Net Meeting, or V-TEL. Any of these alternatives allows for synchronous interaction between instructors and students. The software and hardware for videoconferencing delivers instruction to a roomful of students or to one student sitting at home.

For instance, many of the Commonwealth of Virginia's colleges and universities use the V-Tel system. This system provides complete real-time interaction, not only between the professors and students, but also between students. The V-Tel system is in place for the Virginia Community College System (VCCS), specifically for community college use. Interestingly, the vast majority of

Teletechnet students attend their classes at these institutions in which V-Tel systems exists. The question arises whether State Council for higher Education (SCHEV) would allow maximization of the system by permitting Old Dominion University to use it for the proposed program.

Another option is CUseeMe 5.0 software, which is compatible with web cams including USB and FireWire, and CUseeMe 5.0 lets you:

- See and talk live via the Internet.
- Video Instant Messenger
- Group video chat with up to 12 video windows, and
- Create your own video chat room.

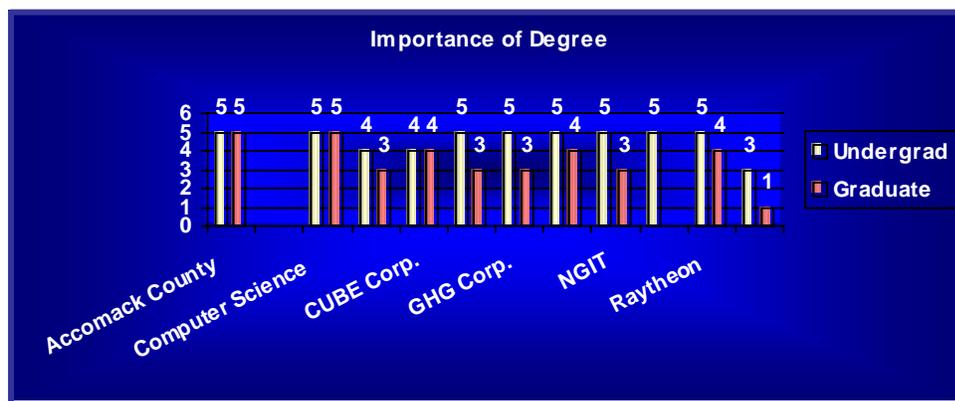
This software and other similar products like Microsoft NetMeeting can be purchased for under \$100 and, in some cases, is available free. Sametime Connect, the software currently used by video-streaming students, also provides these capabilities. The required hardware, which many computer users already own, can be purchased for anywhere from \$100 to as little as \$25 depending on the students current computer configuration. This method would, essentially provide an improved version of the current video-streaming delivery method, allowing for two-way video, audio, white-board and text-chat communication between students and instructors.

C. Marketability

According to the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics, despite the industry's competitiveness, the need and salary for writers and editors is expected to increase faster than the average for all occupations in this area this through the year 2010. This is due to many events, such as the growth in demand for printed and electronic material, increasing market niches, the continuing expansion of scientific and technical information, and because experienced workers retire, transfer to other occupations, or leave the labor force (21).

Any additional education increases a student's marketability in a chosen field, and an advanced degree complements the undergraduate education system while increasing the student's knowledge and skills. Cisco Systems says that the pay gap between college degree holders and non-degree holders has increased from 50 percent in 1980 to about 111 percent today (5).

A majority of local businesses place greater importance upon undergraduate degrees; however, three out of twelve place as much importance, while three out of twelve place slightly less importance upon a graduate degree.



Authors Susan Basalla and Maggie Debelius interviewed several hundred people for their book, *So What Are You Going to Do with That? A Guide to Career Changing for M.A.'s and Ph.D.'s*, and found that most people who earned more money later in their career accredited those increased earnings to a Master or Doctorate degree (2). Furthermore, Rachel Shea reports in *U.S. News* that enrollment in graduate programs has increased over the past year by 13 percent at Minnesota State University-Mankato, by 22 percent at the Washington College of Law at American University in Washington, D.C., by 27 percent at Virginia Tech in Blacksburg, and by 153 percent at the School of Management at Boston University (18).

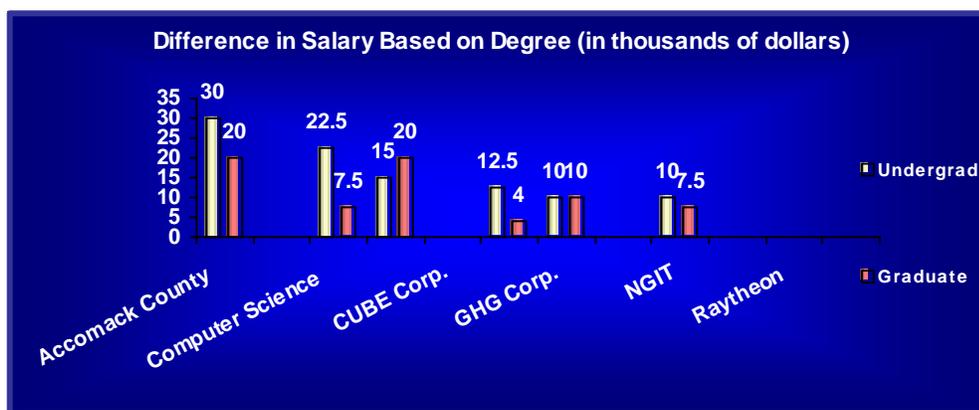
According to the Employment Policy Foundation, a Washington, DC think tank, the holder of a Bachelor's degree earns about \$1.1 million above the earnings of a high school graduate over a 40-year period. The holder of a Master's degree earns about \$2.3 million more than the high school graduate does over the same period. Further, the lifetime income of an individual with a Master's degree surpasses that of an individual with a bachelor's degree by an average of \$333,265 (4).

The U.S. Census Bureau gives the following average salary comparison for 2001 (22):

- High School Degree - \$46,226,
- Associate Degree - \$61,399,
- Bachelor Degree - \$84,794,
- Master Degree - \$98,795,
- Professional Degree - \$134,761,
- Doctor's degree - \$119,629.

Local businesses estimate salary differences from as little as \$2,500 up to \$15,000 or more per year between employees with a Master's degree and those with a Bachelor's degree.

Finally, a graduate degree develops a comprehensive skill set, commands respect, provides career mobility, and enhances job opportunities.



V. Methods and Findings

A. Faculty Interviews

The group brainstormed ideas during a virtual classroom meeting to determine what information needed to be gathered during interviews with faculty members. The information generated eighteen questions that were submitted to each group member to gather feedback. The interviewers used sixteen finalized questions (further divided into eight yes or no and ten open-ended questions) as a guide to interview four faculty members. We conducted three interviews via telephone due to the nature of distance learning and one via e-mail due to time constraints. Each faculty member received a thank you letter. (Appendix: D through H)

Faculty members' greatest concerns about a distance graduate English program included class size and interaction—both between instructor and student and between students. Each interviewee emphasized the importance of limiting class sizes in order to build a sense of community and to accommodate equal involvement of all students. Whereas face-to-face interaction would be preferred, one faculty member felt that non-traditional methods should be employed if a non-traditional student's choices were limited to earning the degree or not being able to earn it at all. Some faculty members suggested ways to enhance Teletechnet delivery to include face-to-face interaction by incorporating a low-residency requirement or adding video-conferencing

software and hardware. In contrast, one instructor saw no problem with videotaping creative writing classes and mailing the tapes to distance sites each week and requiring students to submit assignments via Blackboard.

The interviewees thought that we need to develop the concept of mentors. Who would be mentors? How would the process work outside of the faculty/student realm? Would it be fair to ask an on-campus graduate student to mentor a distance student?

One instructor expressed concern that Teletechnet and distance learning could become a “clearing house” for students. According to this instructor, when a student takes classes from different institutions, it disrupts the natural and desirable course progression obtained from the same institution. Furthermore, instructors get a consistent view of students when most, if not all, courses are taken within the same institution.

Although graduate students are allowed to take four classes at the 500 level with added requirements, two instructors voiced the concern that graduate and undergraduate students in the same would lower the quality of interaction and community due to differences in thinking skills.

Two interviewees voiced concerns about the instructors’ additional workload requirements based on the intensive preparation time required for Teletechnet classes and the demand for more after-class hours in order to accommodate distance students’ needs. One interviewee felt that Teletechnet instructors are not rewarded in terms of time and effort.

All interviewees expressed willingness to teach in a graduate English program via distance, as long as enrollment was limited and alternative delivery modes incorporated. In addition, one instructor visualized graduate students as the ideal group for Teletechnet.

B. Business Interviews

After group consensus, ten questions (further divided into two Likert, eight yes or no, four closed-ended, and one open-ended question) were finalized and used as a guide to interview twelve businesses. We conducted all interviews via telephone, with the exception of two via e-mail, due to time constraints. Each participant received a thank you at the end of the interview. (Appendix: I through L)

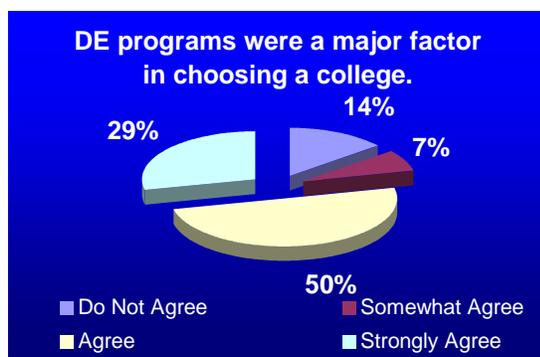
Results of the business interviews indicated that all but three employers would fund employees in a graduate English program via distance

learning with a professional writing concentration. As with any training, approval depended upon applicability of the knowledge and skills gained to the interests of the business, and all businesses required training to be pre-approved. Nine out of twelve reimbursed employees taking graduate classes for full tuition (with reasonable caps) if students met grade requirements. Four businesses required final grades of "B," and seven businesses required final grades of "C." Seven out of twelve reimbursed employees for their books. None reimbursed for mileage. Ten businesses allowed employees to work flex schedules to compensate for normal duty hours missed because of school attendance. Only one, the government, required students to work three hours for every hour missed to attend school.

C. Surveys

1. Student Surveys

The group distributed an email survey to all members of the ENG 435 Management Writing Class through Old Dominion University's Blackboard system. The group asked the respondents to fill out the surveys and return them by email. We counted the number of responses, and created a table in which the results were broken down by category. (Appendix: M through N)



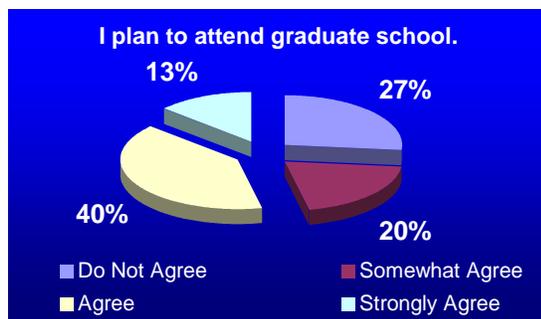
Thirteen students responded. The following is a summary of their answers.

Eleven of the respondents indicated that distance-learning programs were a major factor in choosing a college. All but one of the respondents are distance learning undergraduate

students, and one is a graduate student. Seven respondents expressed interest in pursuing a graduate degree, and six were interested in an English graduate program. One of the respondents was interested in continuing their education at the institution where they received her undergraduate degree, and three students were willing to pay more for distance learning classes. Two of the respondents were willing to spend up to three weeks one semester on campus as part of their degree.

Four students indicated that they would like to have the ability to access all different types of delivery systems, instead of being restricted to only one or two types. Several indicated that since the majority of distance learning students were working adults, then all students should have access to video-streaming class archives, in case they had to work

and miss class. One student felt with the mandatory attendance rules that the distance learning classes were losing their focus for working students. Two students exhibited interest in web-based classes solely.



Two students stated that they would seriously consider an advanced English degree if more delivery systems were available. One student commented that having site facilitators who work with the students as well as performing administrative duties really

made a difference for him with his graduate studies. Another student said that sites need to use software, such as CUseeMe, so the graduate students could interact more with students at other sites and with instructors.

2. Site Director Surveys

The group created a short questionnaire, which included eleven questions (five yes or no, one Likert, and five open-ended follow-up questions), to administer to Teletechnet site directors. The surveys were designed to gain a better understanding of how recent state budget cuts have affected the sites' student services, class availability, and technology availability. However, due to the need for administrative approval, the surveys were not approved nor disseminated soon enough to add to the report. (Appendix P)

D. General Research

1. Distance Education MA Programs

Based on a recommendation by Eugene McAvoy and Sheri Reynolds (11 and 16), we interviewed a representative of Warren Wilson College's MFA Creative Writing program (Appendix O), and then via the Internet, we researched other regionally accredited distance education graduate English programs. We found that Warren Wilson College's low-residency format is quite common among the colleges and universities that offer MFA English programs via distance education. These low-residency programs, which seem to range from eight days to three weeks per year, typically have workshops at the beginnings of each semester or over the summer. The workshops serve as a time in which faculty supervisors are assigned to each student, student requirements and objectives are

communicated, plans for completing course work is determined, and students attend on-campus classes.

To maintain student-professor communication, it is a typical requirement that both parties communicate to discuss specific assignments, progress and writing issues, via email and mailing packets (written work), which students submit to the professors throughout each semester.

We also found it likely that colleges and universities offer only MFA, Creative Writing low-residency English programs; with the exception of Utah State University, which offers a MS in English/ Technical Writing degree (which is completely online), we did not find any colleges or universities offering MA English degrees with professional writing concentrations.

In addition, we found no indication that these programs use alternative and supplemental means of delivery, such as Blackboard, V-Tel, CUseeMe 5.0 or other asynchronous and synchronous video conferencing and communication. In fact, Amy Grimm (7) of Warren Wilson College stated that no other electronic method of communication is used other than the phone and email.

According to U.S. News, a report of regionally accredited online graduate programs, fourteen schools, including Old Dominion University, do not limit enrollment. Five schools limit enrollment to fifteen students, with the University of Phoenix Online limiting enrollment to twelve students. Liberty University in Virginia, and Spalding University in Kentucky, limit classes to thirty students. Alabama's Troy State University and New York's University at Buffalo limit classes to forty students (15).

Merrill Lynch projects the national market for distance education will reach \$7 billion this year, with e-learning generating \$25 billion. Research from the American Federation of Teachers categorizes the expansion of distance education into four categories (10):

1. Existing Institutions (already have or are developing distance education programs),
2. Corporate-University Joint Ventures (new distance education providers in hybrid partnerships),
3. Virtual Universities (online institutions usually without campuses),
4. Corporate Universities (for business and professional training).

3. Graduate Level English Courses at Old Dominion University

Based on the University's Leo-Online course registration and offerings directory, the University is conducting twenty-five different courses in English for the spring 2003 semester (Appendix C). Two of the twenty-five courses (English 544: History of English Language, and English 507: Chaucer's Canterbury Tales), have no available seats. Five of the classes have ten percent or less vacancy. Of the twenty-five courses, there are 323 seats available, based on course maximum capacity. Students have filled 205 seats (plus five seats that have been added as overflows), leaving 113 seats available. Over one-half, fourteen out of the twenty-five classes, have 40 percent or more vacancy rates. Six out of the twenty-five (about one-fourth of the classes) have 60 percent vacancy rates or more.

The mean vacancy for these graduate-level English Courses is thirty-four percent. However, the two courses in which capacity has been exceeded 'decrease' the statistic; therefore, by eliminating these two courses from the calculations, the mean vacancy for classes increases to thirty-eight percent. The median vacancy rate is forty, and the mode vacancy rates are 10, 20, 40, and 45.

In addition, every graduate-level English course for the spring 2003 semester begins at 3:30 PM or later. Ten of the classes begin at 7:10 PM. It is difficult to tell which courses the University offers as both undergraduate and graduate level courses based on the Leo-Online course listing.

4. Gaps needing Future Attention

As addressed earlier, there are a substantial number of graduate Creative Writing programs offered through distance learning, but none apparently for Professional Writing; therefore, we suggest future investigation into the reasons for the contrast. The exploration may lead to understanding student interest in particular areas, and/or how the characteristics of delivery vary between the two types of degrees. Further research may also reveal whether instructor's preferences for delivery methods or experience with different delivery methods might influence an institution's offerings.

In addition, time constraints prevented the group from researching the type of regionally accredited online graduate programs offered by the 89 colleges and universities listed by US News (15).

We mentioned the possibility of using the existing V-Tel system that is present in the Virginia Community College System. However, there are

several issues with V-Tel that would need to be explored. First, future research should tally the existing college and university V-Tel systems throughout the state and nation to determine how many sites (and thus students) could be reached using this method. Second, examining the time slots available, including 'air space' and classroom availability, is an important aspect in determining the suitability of using the in-place systems. Third, SCHEV'S policy on intercollegiate sharing of equipment and services may restrict Old Dominion University from using the existing systems. Fourth, it is important to know the costs involved in procuring and setting up V-Tel on the main campus, and the costs associated with training Teletechnet site staff and main campus faculty to use the system. Finally, it has come to our attention that reduction of visual and audio quality is highly possible as additional sites are added to a particular V-Tel structure. As such, the technical side of V-Tel needs exploring (3). These issues are beyond the scope of this project, but the V-Tel system could be explored later as a potential alternative delivery system that meets the students', professors', University's and the State's goals.

Because we did not have access to former and future semester course-offerings, our findings are limited in this area. However, it would be an area worthy of future exploration as means to determining if the 34 to 38-percent vacancy rate in graduate English courses is true for all semesters, or if the spring 2003 vacancy rates are an anomaly.

In addition, time constraints prevented the group from learning more about student interest in the proposed program and the impact on Teletechnet sites and site staff through surveys. It would be worthwhile for the University to gauge student interest of the proposed program to determine if there is ample interest to support the program and to determine the demographics of those interested. It would also be wise to explore the potential impact that budget cuts have had on the Teletechnet sites and site staff, including classroom space, technological equipment, and general staffing issues and costs, as an additional program might have these related impacts on each site.

VI. Evaluation & Discussion of Findings, Recommendations

A. Distance Education Growth & Trends

Old Dominion University expanded its Teletechnet delivery from one degree program in 1985 to 36 degree programs in 2003. Educational institutions offering online graduate programs increased from one college in 1983 to 89 colleges today (10).

Our research shows that national distance education enrollment expands each year as an increasing number of non-traditional learners choose to go back to school to earn degrees and continue their education (10). Further, the market is an international one. Globalization increases the need for skilled employees in areas of the world with limited educational opportunities.

Advances in technology allow for improved delivery methods. These methods incorporate features that enhance the interactivity between instructors and students and between students. Students can sit at their personal computers and interact with instructors and students by purchasing a web cam and videoconferencing software. The growth and trends of distance education indicate a potential market for a MA English program through distance learning. Further, the advances in technology indicate ways to enhance Teletechnet delivery to allow for synchronous interaction.

In addition, coupled with the growth and trends of distance education, the occupational outlook for writers is promising, yet competitive. On one hand, this outlook is an indicator of the needs of the writing and publishing community. On the other hand, it is an indicator that there is a need for a program such as the one proposed, which will provide education for those interested, as well as make them more marketable in a competitive occupation.

B. Faculty Interviews

Given the findings from faculty interviews that illustrate faculty members' strong belief in close interaction with their students, administrators of the proposed program would need to determine a maximum enrollment number in the proposed program (including onsite and distance learners). Ideally, the enrollment maximum for the program would afford interested students acceptance into the

program, but also allow for substantial and quality interaction between faculty and students.

C. Business Interviews

Businesses will reimburse employees for undergraduate and graduate college courses as long as the courses relate to a field or skill that will benefit the company. All but three of the businesses we interviewed will approve and fund employees in a graduate MA English program. A local hospital in Fishersville and the local county government entity in Front Royal will not sponsor employees in a graduate MA English program. The hospital contact feels that directors and managers with a Bachelor's Degree should already be proficient in writing. The third company will not sponsor employees in a graduate MA English program due to the nature of their business (testing, inspecting, and certifying lifting devices and pressures systems and vessels) at Wallops Island, Virginia and Greenbelt, Maryland.

Although five of the remaining nine businesses are local to Wallops Island, Virginia, their corporate headquarters in El Segundo, California; Gaithersburg, Maryland; Lexington, Massachusetts; Las Vegas, Nevada; Houston, Texas; Herndon, Virginia; and Sterling, Virginia; would probably sponsor additional employees nationwide. Also, the national government entity in Greenbelt, Maryland, will sponsor as many employees as the budget allows in a distance graduate MA English program.

A market does exist, within the business world, for a distance graduate MA English program. We suggest that interviews be conducted with Human Resource Managers for the corporate headquarters of the interviewed businesses and with other government agencies to further research this market. Further, we suggest that projected income from tuition be compared to the costs of implementing a distance graduate MA English program.

D. Student Surveys

The results of our preliminary survey of the current English 435 Management Writing class reveal that six out of 13 students are interested in pursuing a Master of Arts English degree. We suggest that Old Dominion University's Office of Distance Learning survey the entire student population in order to ascertain the interest in a Master of Arts English program through distance learning.

Our findings illustrate that the distance education element is perhaps the most influential factor in students' choice to earn a degree through Teletechnet. Over one-half of the students surveyed (seven of thirteen) said they wish to pursue a master's degree, and almost one-half (six of thirteen) said they are specifically interested in a Master of Arts in English. Because distance education is a leading factor in the students' decisions to attend the University, and because nearly one-half of the class is interested in a MA English degree, we can conclude that would be at least some interest in the proposed program.

Further, because some students said they are willing to pay more for a degree such as this, it may be possible for the University to offset costs by charging students in the proposed program more, within reason, to deliver the courses in an effective manner. Furthermore, while only two students said they are willing to spend up to three weeks one semester on campus as part of their degree, it does not rule out that students may be willing to spend a few days per semester as part of the low-residency portion of the program.

While four students indicated that they would like to have the ability to access all different types of delivery systems, several indicated that since the majority of distance learning students were working adults, then they should at least have access to video-streaming class archives. Two students exhibited interest in web-based classes solely. These findings coincide with the demographics of Teletechnet students, as most are working adults who do not have the same flexibility as traditionally aged students, especially those who attend classes at the main campus. Unfortunately, these views do not align with Old Dominion University's English Department faculty, as the faculty are highly in favor of Teletechnet, but believe that face-to-face, or at least "virtual" and synchronous interaction is the most important element to learning.

E. Distance Education Examples

The concept of a low-residency program via semester workshops is appealing. While Master of Arts English degrees at a distance are limited in the nation, Warren Wilson College, as well as others, serves as an example for Old Dominion University of how institutions can effectively conduct an MA English program. Warren Wilson College bases its program around independent study, a ten-day per semester workshop, and faculty supervisors who guide students throughout their residency. This system allows students to concentrate on areas of strong interest, according to their schedules

throughout most of each term, while reaping the benefits of individualized faculty interaction. Students attend the workshops for ten days at the beginning of the semesters, wherein they attend classes and design the semester with their faculty mentor/supervisor. They maintain contact via phone and email, and base their communication on packets that the students submit, which include their written work and evaluations.

Another interesting finding in the research about other programs is the absence of concentrations in Professional Writing. We might ask if the Creative Writing concentration is more popular than Professional Writing concentrations because there is a difference in effectively delivering and learning between the two genres, or if the absence of Professional Writing programs has occurred because Creative Writing better aligns with the demographics of distance learners. It is beyond the ability of this group to decide if one concentration is more or less difficult to deliver and learn from at a distance compared to the other concentration, but it is an area that could be addressed in subsequent research.

However, despite the above finding and statements, there is the suggestion that students wishing to earn graduate degrees in Professional Writing via distance education or low-residency programs may be underserved by not having their needs met by the current MA/MFA programs. Therefore, this fact may actually indicate a potential and specific market for a Master of Arts English-Professional Writing program.

From a student perspective, student-to-student interaction and feedback is also an essential component to learning. Coupled with the low-residency and faculty mentor program, students of the group's proposed program could utilize the Blackboard system as a means to maintain and reap the benefits of interaction between their fellow students on a continual basis.

Moreover, if the University were to implement a program utilizing the existing Blackboard system, and even adding V-Tel or CUseeMe 5.0 or other methods to the program, interaction between students and professors, and between fellow students, would presumably be much greater than what those in Warren Wilson College's program and other similar programs experience. To add to this, because of the existing technological infrastructure, additional technological delivery systems, and/or potential state resources (V-Tel), it is feasible to reduce the workshop period to fewer days than the example program's requirements, which will ultimately expand the

market for the program by appealing to a larger number of prospective students.

Because we found no distance programs offering MA English degrees with Professional Writing concentrations, we can assume that there is an untapped market of potential students. As such, it would be advantageous for the University and potential students if the University were to develop a distance education program that offers concentrations in both Creative Writing and Professional Writing. In this sense, the University could take advantage of the already established demand for degrees in Creative Writing in distance education. Moreover, the University could be the vanguard of Professional Writing programs via distance-learning, and have its choice of the best students because there is no, or very little, competition at this time.

F. Graduate English Course Capacity, Vacancy, & Time Slots

The group is cognizant of the potential costs associated with operating the proposed program, especially in relation to the effects from recent state budget cuts on the University. However, one of our most important stands is that the University can offset the costs of implementing the program by using elements already in place. One of the elements is maximizing the enrollment in courses already offered. From a cost perspective, when the allowable capacity is not reached, this translates into loss for the University; moreover, the greater the vacancies in the classes, the steeper the losses.

As seen by the numbers in the findings section, only one-fifth of the English department's courses are reaping their fullest (or near fullest) potential in regards to tuition revenue (more than 90 percent full). Over one-half of the classes are 40 percent vacant, and nearly one in four has a 60 percent vacancy. English 595: American Travel Literature, which is a course that may very well appeal to the proposed program's students who are interested in professional writing, has an 85 percent vacancy rate. English 583: Advanced News Reporting, another course with high probability for program appeal, is 60 percent vacant. There are substantial vacancies in the creative writing category of classes (drama writing and poetry) that would also appeal to prospective students of the program.

In addition, given what we know already about the lifestyles and demographics of Teletechnet students, the scheduling trend detected in the course offerings regarding times slots offer another resourceful

fact. The evening classes are highest in demand for Teletechnet students, as they fit student's work and family schedules best.

Because our findings show that the University's graduate English courses for the present semester do not meet allowable capacity, it would be in the best financial interest of the University to bring in students to fill the vacant seats. A distance graduate English program is a viable solution because students of the proposed program would find many of the classes and the timeslots appealing. It makes sense that the University could prevent future loss by offering a program that maximizes existing courses and all the expenses associated with offering these courses.

G. Graduate English Program Costs & Other cost Issues

Regarding tuition, the disparity between capacity and seats available possibly translates into a \$77, 292 loss just for the spring 2003 semester. The University has paid out \$220, 932 (based on tuition rates) to carry the twenty-five classes, but has most likely only collected \$143, 640 (\$140, 220 for maximum capacity plus \$3,420 for five additional students) from student tuition. That is a 35 percent loss, which roughly coincides with the vacancy rates for the classes.

During an informal interview (3), the group learned that in addition to overall operating funds, circumstances forced the University to cut Teletechnet marketing money. We propose this question to Old Dominion University: How can Old Dominion University recruit distance students for new, as well as old, programs if the sites do not have money for operations and advertising? If we may suggest one point, we tend to believe that problems with budget cuts may be partially overcome through stronger relationship building with partners and potential partners.

For instance, we find that as far as businesses providing funding for Old Dominion University, two examples include the Ford Motor Company, which provides the site in Norfolk, and the NAVY, which provides the site at Wallops Island free. Concerning the Wallops Island site (housed within the Morale, Welfare, and Recreation (MWR) Building, the NAVY furnishes the televisions, the stands, the convenors, and other equipment, if available, like copiers and paper shredders. Further, Wallops Flight Facility, through their partnership with the NAVY, provides some furniture for the site and furnishes publicity by sending Old Dominion University Teletechnet schedules to all employees. Old Dominion University at Wallops Island provides

the satellite dish and the antennas, provides Internet access for the Navy's computers in the MWR computer room, and pays for all wiring. The site director serves as a proctor, as well as provides educational counseling for NAVY and NASA personnel.

We have also discovered that some community colleges may perceive Old Dominion University as an interloper and do not establish a viable partnership (3). This seems unfair, since a good site director can refer many recruits to the community college for requirements needed to satisfy the Old Dominion University lower-level degree requirements.

We contend that it is vital that the University, business, government agencies, and the sites develop and maintain strong relationships as all are dependent on one another in one degree or another. It seems that if the Teletechnet program had more support from outside sources and from within, then Old Dominion University may be able to realize savings in those areas and expand the Teletechnet program offerings. The group regrets that we were unable to contact the site director in Norfolk to explore how Ford Motor Company supports Old Dominion University. We suggest that further research is needed to compare other distance sites to these corporate and government-sponsored sites.

VII. Conclusion

It is our belief that the research shows the potential viability of a Teletechnet Master of Arts English program at Old Dominion University, and the potential program's benefits to students, the University, and the academic community.

We have demonstrated our rationale for finding solutions to the expressed problems with students, faculty, and University needs, as they relate to desirability, feasibility, and cost: Teletechnet exists and works well for all parties involved; there are viable technological alternatives to increase interaction between professors and students; and student marketability in the competitive, yet strong writing profession, increases with increased educational levels.

Our findings demonstrate that Old Dominion University English professors are in support of Teletechnet and receptive to the proposed program. We have suggested ways in which the University can overcome the faculty's greatest concern, interaction, by presenting the possibility of a low-residency program that

incorporates faculty mentoring into the requirements, and several alternative delivery systems.

We have also suggested how existing courses can be utilized, such as current English courses, to provide classes to the proposed program's students, and how this translates into taking advantage of the already approved maximum capacity for the classes would decrease the University's costs.

While the University or other interested parties would need to study levels of student interest in the Teletechnet Master of Arts English program further, our preliminary findings support our claim that there is interest in the proposed English program. Further, we have explained the growth of distance education, the popularity of distance education English programs, and the lack of Professional Writing graduate programs in distance education. We reiterate that the University can join in serving the existing market for Creative Writing programs, as well as lead the industry by developing a Professional Writing program via distance education. In addition, we have suggested that as a leader of a program who incorporates distance education with valuable daily interaction between professors and students via videoconferencing and blackboard, a low-residency workshop, and faculty mentoring, the University will tap into and have first access to the best and the brightest undergraduate writers who wish to advance their degrees in writing in a quality and highly interactive environment.

In short, we have considered factors that enhance the existing Teletechnet programs, as well as those that may limit the implementation of adding graduate programs, and believe we have offered several alternative solutions. It is our hope that you will see the potential as well, and consequently share our findings with Old Dominion University's English Department and Administration so that they may further investigate the possibilities for a Teletechnet Master of Arts English program. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have questions or concerns about our proposal. Thank you for your time and consideration on this matter.

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Appendix A

Teletechnet Undergraduate Academic Programs, 2002 - 2004 Catalog

COLLEGE OF ARTS & LETTERS

- B.A./B.S. in Criminal Justice
- B.S. in Interdisciplinary Studies Teacher Preparation (PK-6)
- B.S. in Communication - Professional Communication
- B.S. in Interdisciplinary Studies - Professional Writing

COLLEGE OF BUSINESS & PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

- B.S. in Business Administration - Accounting Major PLEASE NOTE: THIS LONG-RANGE SCHEDULE IS INCLUSIVE OF ALL BUSINESS ADMIN. MAJORS!
- B.S. in Business Administration - Finance Major
- B.S. in Business Administration - Information Systems Major
- B.S. in Business Administration - Management Major
- B.S. in Business Administration - Marketing Major

DARDEN COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

- B.S. in Human Service Counseling
- B.S. in Occupational and Technical Studies - Industry Training -
- B.S. in Occupational and Technical Studies - Training Specialist Emphasis

COLLEGE OF ENGINEERING & TECHNOLOGY

- B.S.E.T., Civil Engineering Technology - Construction Engineering and Structural Design Option
- B.S.E.T., Civil Engineering Technology - Surveying and Site Development Option
- B.S.E.T., Electrical Engineering Technology - Electrical Systems Technology Option
- B.S.E.T., Electrical Engineering Technology - Computer Engineering Technology Option
- B.S.E.T., General Engineering Technology - Computer & Network Operations Technology Option
- B.S.E.T., General Engineering Technology - Construction Management Technology Option
- B.S.E.T., General Engineering Technology - Electromechanical Systems Option (Navy College)
- B.S.E.T., General Engineering Technology - Geomatics & GIS Technology Option
- B.S.E.T., General Engineering Technology - Operations Management Technology Option
- B.S.E.T., Mechanical Engineering Technology - Manufacturing Systems and Mechanical System Design Option
- B.S.E.T., Mechanical Engineering Technology - Nuclear Engineering Technology Option

COLLEGE OF HEALTH SCIENCES

B.S. in Health Sciences w/ minor in Human Services Counseling

B.S. in Health Sciences w/ minor in Management

B.S. in Medical Technology

B.S. in Nursing (RN to BSN)

COLLEGE OF SCIENCE

B.S. in Computer Science

Appendix B

Teletechnet Graduate Academic Programs, 2002 - 2004 Catalog

COLLEGE OF ARTS & LETTERS

None at this time

COLLEGE OF BUSINESS & PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

Master of Business Administration [only being offered through the Higher Education Centers and on main campus]

DARDEN COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

M.S. in Education - Special Education

M.S. in Occupational and Technical Studies

Business and Industry Training Concentration

Community College Teaching Concentration

Middle and Secondary Teaching Concentration

COLLEGE OF ENGINEERING & TECHNOLOGY

Master's of Engineering Management

COLLEGE OF HEALTH SCIENCES

M.S. in Community Health

M.S. in Nursing - Family Nurse Practitioner

M.S. in Nursing - Leadership in Nursing & Health Care Systems

M.S. in Nursing - Women's Health Nurse Practitioner

COLLEGE OF SCIENCES

None at this time

Appendix C

Tuition Rates & English Courses

Calculations: Old Dominion Tuition Rates Based on Spring Semester 2003	
Graduate cost per Credit:	\$228.00
Graduate cost per 3-credit course	$\$228.00 \times 3 = \684.00
Graduate cost per degree program (30 credits)	$\$228.00 \times 30 = \$6,840$

Old Dominion University Campus Facts

Old Dominion University Graduate English Course Vacancies Based on Spring Semester 2003					
Course Prefix	Title	Meeting Time	Capacity	Seats Remaining	Vacancy Rate %
583	Advanced News Reporting	1620-1900	5	3	40
558	Craft of Dramatic Writing	1620-1900	10	6	40
557	The Craft of Poetry	1745-1900	7	5	71
If 650	Creative Writing Fiction	1620-1900	10	1	10
552	Advanced Poetry Workshop	1910-2150	10	7	70
650	Creative Writing Non-fiction	1620-1900	10	1	10
551	Advanced Fiction Workshop	1910-2150	5	1	20
595	American Travel Literature	1910-2150	15	13	87
544	History of English Language	1620-1900	15	-1	-.06
595	Topics: Jewish American Literature	1910-2150	10	5	50
507	Chaucer's	1910-2150	19	-4	-.2

	Canterbury Tales				
615	Shakespeare	1910-2150	20	11	55
535	Management Writing	1915-2,200	3	2	67
663	Theories of Literature	1910-2150	20	3	15
581	Advanced Public Relations	1910-2150	9	4	45
665	Teaching Writing with Technology	1620-1900	20	10	50
671	Phonology	1620-1900	20	9	45
661	Craft of Poetry	1620-1900	10	1	10
672	Syntax	1620-1900	20	1	.05
657	American Literature, 1810-1870	1620-1900	20	3	15
676	Semantics	1620-1900	20	9	45
553	Advanced Dramatic Writing Workshop	1910-2150	5	1	20
538	The Twentieth-Century British Novel	1620-1900	20	10	50
548	The American Novel, 1910-1945	1620-1900	15	6	40
525	World Film Directors in Context	1620-1900	5	1	20

87, 71, 70, 67, 55, 50, 50, 50, 45, 45, 45, 40, 40, 40, 20, 20, 20, 15, 15, 10, 10, 10, 0.05, -0.06, -0.2

Vacancy Rate %

Mean of vacancy rate: 34 % (* The two courses in which capacity has been exceeded decreases the number. Eliminating these two courses from the calculations (879/23) makes the vacancy rate for classes 38 %).

Median vacancy rate: 40

Mode vacancy rates: 10, 20, 40, 45

Old Dominion University Leo Online

Appendix D

Faculty Interview Questions

You have taught undergraduate classes via Teletechnet or other DE classes. Have you taught any graduate classes via Teletechnet and/or would you be willing to teach graduate classes via Teletechnet?

Can you tell me some of the advantages to teaching via this method?

What are some of the problems you have experienced?

I understand that the greatest potential obstacle in adding classes for any program, such as a graduate program in English, via Teletechnet is the availability of time blocks and scheduling. Do you know of other obstacles that should be addressed?

What are the differences between grads and undergrads in the context of distance education in your professional opinion? How would you expect these differences, if there are any, to affect the learning environment and student success?

What are your thoughts about class size, and its relationship to our proposed program?

You currently teach Professional/Creative Writing classes. If scheduling does not permit for one of your classes to be broadcast via Teletechnet, would it be possible to have your class taped and videos mailed to the sites each week for viewing and returning completed assignments via e-mail or Blackboard?

Would it be possible for you to teach distance students strictly via video-streaming or Blackboard?

Would it be desirable for you to teach distance students strictly via video-streaming or Blackboard?

What distance modes do you feel would best suit a distance graduate program in English?

If mentors were appointed to guide distance graduate students and help them with the requirements when needed, would the distance situation be improved?

What advice can you give me for approaching college administrators with our suggestion?

Are you aware of other university programs like the one we have proposed? What do you like or dislike about them?

How would you recommend that applicants be selected for the distance graduate program?

How do you envision graduate students earning credits in courses that have been originally designed and broadcast to undergraduates? In other words, what would the additional requirements look like?

Do you think it's feasible that graduate students can take many of their courses via undergrad existing Teletechnet classes (for example, Intercultural Communications was offered as COMM 400 and 500 last year)?

Appendix E

Dr. Luisa Igloria Interview

Conducted by Terry Ewell on April 1, 2003

Dr. Igloria had hoped to interview by telephone, but circumstances led to an e-mail interview.

Dr. Igloria tells me that she has taught undergraduate classes via Teletechnet, but not graduate classes. She is willing to teach graduate classes via Teletechnet and says, "In fact, I think that teaching graduate classes on Teletechnet would in some ways be more ideal than teaching undergrad classes."

She approaches the advantages of teaching via Teletechnet with a unique perspective and thinks that Teletechnet would be "advantageous to students who have the ability to stay focused and motivated, whose desire for learning would be a stronger factor than any challenges or limitations than distance or location offer." She suggests that Teletechnet may foster a "more focused learning process" due to the necessary streamlining of course material and delivery. On the other hand, she feels that streamlining could lead to oversimplification. Her biggest concern is the lack of face-to-face interpersonal experience that she shares with other professors of the Humanities.

On the question of obstacles to adding programs to Teletechnet, Dr. Igloria expresses concerns about the balancing of faculty workload and input against regular duties, because Teletechnet classes require intensive preparation time and demand more after-class hours "than any regular class ever does." She goes on to say that Teletechnet lacks consistent administrative support, and instructors aren't rewarded in terms of time and effort.

If a program combined graduates and undergraduates in the same classes, hypothetically speaking, Dr. Igloria visualizes the graduate class being treated as an electronic seminar with high levels of input from the grad students as a requisite. She mentions the possibility of a distance graduate class enhancing the mentoring process, through more one-on-one contact, that is available in a directed readings grad class, for example. It could "become a venue for sharing grad students' research and findings with others (undergraduates) in the class and in this way get valuable feedback as work in progress is refined throughout the semester." She asks about our idea of mentoring, and I will try to send an explanation.

Dr. Igloria would like to see class size based upon the instructor's workload in a regular semester. She would like no more than 12 to 15 class members unless the instructor taught no more than two classes for that semester. In other words, if the instructor taught one regular class, his/her Teletechnet class might be increased to 20 members.

In contrast with my other interviewees, this professor sees no problem with videotaping her creative writing classes and mailing the tape to distant sites each week so that students can view the class and submit assignments via e-mail or Blackboard. In fact, she says it has been done, before. Teaching a class strictly via Blackboard without another component does not appeal to her, and she has not taught video streamers. She also finds the feasibility of graduate students taking courses via undergrad existing Teletechnet classes potentially confusing and would not recommend that route.

Dr. Igloria speaks of a friend she has in Hawaii who has taught creative writing workshops, successfully, online. "I have wanted to propose something like this for the creative program for a while, and I am actually tinkering with some ideas myself, in this direction."

All three interviewees have recommended that applicants for a distance graduate program in English be selected by the same procedures as on-campus programs. Dr. Igloria envisions graduate students (earning credits in courses originally designed and broadcast to undergraduates):

- submitting more in-depth writing,
- conferencing more with professors,
- presenting a more extensive writing portfolio with a more clearly unifying focus ("as opposed to undergraduates not having to think about their final portfolios as mall chapbooks or as material potentially ready to offer for publication"), and
- presenting seminars where individual students have the opportunity to teach others through their own work and writing.

Appendix F

Eugene McAvoy Interview

Conducted by Terry Ewell on March 6, 2003

Eugene has taught undergraduate classes, but not graduate classes, via Teletechnet. He would definitely be willing to teach graduate classes via Teletechnet or other distance learning methods.

Eugene described the following advantages to teaching via Teletechnet:

- exposure to a wider audience,
- potential for greater diversity,
- additional world experience gained from the range of ages of distance learners,
- ability to use a greater variety of media for teaching, and
- the fact that distance learners tend to be more serious than on-campus undergraduates.

He believes that teaching via Teletechnet provides a “greater challenge in which the rewards are commiserate with that challenge.”

Eugene was familiar with other university programs similar to the one my group has proposed and mentioned the low-residency MFA program at Warren Wilson University in North Carolina, the entirely on-line graduate programs delivered by the University of Phoenix Online, and the distance doctorate program delivered by the Australian University in Brisbane.

One problem associated with a distance graduate program, according to Eugene, would be the accessibility of the instructor for students as well as the accessibility of students for the instructor. “Regular and frequent interaction is extremely important. The graduate instructor models the professional skills and behaviors that we hope to manifest in the students.”

A big part of graduate school, for instance in Creative Writing, is the independent research. Eugene explains, “No research occurs in a vacuum, and all research is based on what came before and what is going on now. The basis for learning is the dialogue among students and professionals. Feedback is important.”

A problem with the present undergraduate distance education program is the “clearing house” phenomenon—students can take a class from one college and two classes from another college and so on. This “clearing house” conveyance disrupts the continuity of the degree. Eugene explains, “Extreme precautions should be taken to prevent that from happening in a graduate distance program. Continuity is more important than is interaction and continuity of course progression from the same institution with a consistent view of the graduate.” He feels that the biggest disadvantage to a distance program in English would be the loss of that continuity

and mentions that Old Dominion University is even looking at a combined MA/PHD program where an undergraduate student could pursue their masters and continue into a doctorate program, thus ensuring continuity.

To further develop the sense of community, Eugene maintains graduate class sizes should definitely be limited in order to accommodate equal involvement by all, because the course work is more in-depth and more detailed. Eugene ideally recommends 15 students and demands that no more than 25 be admitted. He also thinks requirements for applicants should be the same as for on-campus graduate programs. As an advisor for the Professional Writing Program, Eugene believes that about 50% or more of his advisees would be interested in a distance graduate program in English. On this positive note, I thank Eugene for his thoughtful and informative responses. He wishes us luck!

Appendix G

Dr. Joyce Neff Interview

Conducted by Sherril Stinnett on March 5, 2003

From a teaching perspective, she said that teaching via Teletechnet is different, but not necessarily better. She likes that it includes a more diversified student body. She likes that more Teletechnet students are adult students with real-life experience coming in, and that they are already motivated to do well.

Disadvantages include the difference in the real-life classroom. Face-to-face interaction is quicker and usually more efficient for the student and the teacher. Concerning graduate courses, Professor Neff emphasized the positive attributes that come from being in a small classroom with each student receiving individualized attention from the instructor. This would be hard to accomplish as effectively via TNN. She stated that there are no models currently for Old Dominion University to benchmark.

Some of the problems with Teletechnet she has experienced is the time it takes to communicate with students. She says that it takes twice as long to accomplish what can be quickly accomplished with a few sentences after class between instructor and student. She stated that she has to write everything out because of student misunderstandings. She did say that with graduate students some of the time-consuming explanations might be eliminated, since they are more mature and willing to seek for answers to their questions instead of relying on her to make sure that everything is crystal clear. After thinking about it, she stated that **“graduate students may turn out to be the perfect group”** in regard to distance education learning.

Some of the obstacles she sees concerning Old Dominion University is that the university is already suffering from a shortage of needed faculty. She said that it might be possible for graduate students to take some of their required 500-course subjects in the same classroom as the 400-course subjects. She stated that each grad student (MA level) is only allowed to take 4 at the 500 level; they must take 6 or more courses at the 600 and up level, and they would either have to hire additional faculty to teach these courses, or figure out a way to broadcast the courses currently being taught at the main campus.

She stated that the cap on graduate classes should be 15 - 20 students. If this number were already enrolled at the main campus, then it would put an additional strain on the existing faculty. Adding more students may be cost-effective, but may not benefit the student as he or she is trying to become competent in one main area.

Professor Neff stated that **discussion** is considered the most important factor in graduate work. A system would have to be set up where discussion was available between students and instructors. She stated that our current technology is "not quite there yet."

"Students become better writers if they have an audience."

She did state that a proposal was in the works for a graduate English program that would offer a PHD in Digital Communication/Professional Writing. The layout for this proposed classroom would be held via Virtual Classroom only in the higher education centers. She stated that in her opinion, this project only stands a 20% chance of being approved and enacted at this time.

Professor Neff did like the idea of mentors. She said that we as students needed to come up with some creative solutions concerning new programs, "**because we know more about what we need.**"

Professor Neff suggested students coming to the main campus for 3 weeks a year, in order to work one-on-one with their professors concerning their thesis and ideas.

Having businesses willing to foot the bill for their employees to take the graduate courses would be a good argument needed to convince administration of the necessity of this particular program. She said that it would be a good idea if we could come up with the name of some area businesses that would be willing to sponsor at least one student per year.

Professor Neff stated that the entrance competencies would have to remain the same as the current ones for campus students.

She is not aware of any other university programs like the one we are trying to initiate.

Appendix H

Sheri Reynolds Interview

Conducted by Terry Ewell on March 2, 2003

Sheri said that a vital part of her graduate experience was to interact with her instructors, and that through that interaction she became her own version of what a teacher should be. She learned about areas of expertise and came to understand authority and power. She chose to emulate some of her teachers and chose not to emulate others. She thinks that the lack of personal access in a distance learning graduate program would limit interaction not only between faculty and students, but also between students.

Sheri mentioned the low-residency programs offered at other colleges whereby distant students communicate electronically with their instructors and physically spend up to three weeks on campus. She felt that a low-residency program combined with Teletechnet would allow students to interact with their instructors and classmates, to participate in workshops, and to attend classes together.

Sheri suggested that I encourage the group to include the low-residency program at Warren Wilson University in North Carolina as a model. She mentioned that her colleague, Ms. Luisa Igloria, Associate Professor in the English Department, Creative Writing Program, & Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity, had participated in one of Warren Wilson's programs for a week during winter break and encouraged me to contact Ms. Igloria. She also suggested we look at the University of Hawaii's program.

Although Sheri has not taught any Teletechnet classes, she visualizes distance students (seeking a graduate degree in English) enrolled in a combined Teletechnet/low-residency program and equates her thesis students with those distance students. Sheri's thesis students initially meet with her to execute a plan for their studies, then drop off and pick up returned work from internal Old Dominion University mailboxes to complete their independent studies. Sheri meets with each student about every two months. Intense conferencing and one-on-one contact allows attention to detail and to the specific needs of each student.

Sheri prefers the personal, one-on-one contact between teacher and student achieved in a traditional learning environment and poses that contact as the most desirable aspect of any MFA program in creative writing; however, she believes non-traditional methods must be employed if a non-traditional student's choices are limited to earning a degree via non-traditional means or not being able to earn a degree at all.

Class sizes should definitely be limited for this proposal, according to Sheri. "How can you grade that much writing, otherwise?" she asks. She feels that the present numbers of students in most Teletechnet classrooms severely limit student participation and do not allow students the time they need to ask questions and to

explore potential answers. "In order to help a student with a problem or to help a student expand his/her mind in such large classrooms," Sheri says, "a professor needs a lot more time to discover how that student thinks."

"Teletechnet and other distance learning methods allow for greater diversity in the classroom," Sheri says. "The different kinds of students, based on the differences in ages and the expertise that each person brings, enrich the classroom." She feels that the courses she teaches would be difficult to adapt to a distance program and expands, "Students express themselves in different ways: some are better writers, and some are better speakers. Distance learning limits the communication aspects of non-verbal interaction. How do you convey tone in writing? How does tone get handled?"

Sheri's classes are not lecture-oriented, but more workshop-oriented. Students form groups and respond to each other's writing, thereby teaching themselves in the process. They learn how to be critics. For instance, one student might have a great dialogue going on between two characters, but another student notices that there are no clues to where (location) the dialogue is taking place. The student that notices that lack of summary learns to not make the same mistake in his/her writing.

Sheri feels that a mentor could be important but isn't sure how that aspect would work outside of the faculty/student realm. The one-on-one relationship between the instructor and the student fosters a very different environment from the distance environment. "There is an impersonal aspect without that visual contact. The visual contact contributes to a sense of personality."

"Another negative aspect of distance education," Sheri mentions, "is its dependence upon technology." For instance, the site may go down or satellite time may not be available. However, distance education affords an educational opportunity to a great number of people who would not otherwise have that opportunity.

Sheri uses this metaphor to describe distance education. "You might have a character with a head and two eyes and a mouth, but no nose. Does no nose mean you are going to love that character any less? In spite of the fact, you still love that character. So, the opportunity to acquire a degree or not is in the best interest of the student in spite of the fact that there is a lack of personal contact."

Sheri said that grad students are only allowed to take about three or so classes that combine 400/500 level classes. She doesn't think that grad students should be in classes with undergrad students because these peers are not thinking at the same level as the graduate students.

We discussed the requirements for the MLA Program in Creative Writing. An applicant must furnish:

- writing sample,
- personal statement,
- GRE scores,
- transcripts, and
- letters of recommendation from instructors, past teachers, and employers (which would be very, very important in our proposed program for present DE students since the professors have not had in-person contact with the applicants and instructors would want to know if the student is disciplined, self-directed, self-motivated, or has a drive to pursue the degree).

Sheri cautioned me about backing up our proposed program with examples of programs at other universities and to provide evidence. As we concluded our interview, she wished us luck with our project.

Appendix I

Business Interview Questions

- 1) On a scale of 1 to 5, how important would you rate an undergraduate degree in your company? How important would you rate a graduate degree in your company?
- 2) Could you give me an idea of the salary difference between employees with no degree and those with an undergraduate degree? Between employees with an undergraduate degree and a graduate degree?
- 3) Do you fund undergraduate and graduate classes for your employees? If yes, do you pay for or reimburse employees for partial or full tuition?
- 4) Do you pay for or reimburse employee for books?
- 5) Do you reimburse employees for mileage to and from school, if the employee leaves from his workplace to travel to school and returns to his workplace after school?
- 6) Do you allow employees who attend school any time off to attend school?
- 7) Do you allow employees to work flextime to compensate for normal duty hours missed because of school attendance?
- 8) Do you require employees to compensate for any time off for school? For example, some federal agencies require an employee to work 3 extra hours for each hour that they are absent for school.
- 9) What are the requirements for your employees to attend undergraduate classes? Graduate classes?
- 10) If a distance education program were offered in English with a choice of a professional or creative writing concentration, would you be interested in sponsoring one of your employees to participate in the program?

Appendix J

List of Businesses Interviewed

Terry Ewell conducted nine interviews via telephone with the following Human Resource Managers, Business Managers or Contract Managers of the stated businesses. Win Iden interviewed Anita Mabie, and Sherril Stinnett interviewed Vicki Price. Interview dates are in parentheses. We utilized the set of ten questions listed in Appendix H and thanked each interviewee at the conclusion of the interview.

Accomack County Government (4/1/03)
Attn: Linda Martin, Assistant Administrator
Telephone 757-787-5700
Accomac, VA 23301

Augusta Medical Center (3/13/03)
Attn: Vicki Price, Human Resources Specialist
78 Medical Center Drive
Fishersville, VA. 22939

Computer Science Corporation (3/25/03)
Engineering Services
Attn: Charles R. Hickman, Contract Manager
Telephone 757-824-2274
Wallops Island, VA 23337

CORTZ III (4/1/03)
Logistics Services
Attn: Sue Bigbee, Business Manager
Telephone 301-286-9614
Greenbelt, MD 20771

CUBE Corporation (3/25/03)
Facilities Maintenance, Logistics Services,
Plant Protection, & Print Shop
Attn: Carol White, Human Resources Manager
Telephone 757-824-1699
Wallops Island, VA 23337

EG&G Washington Analytical (3/31/03)
Technical and Analytical Services for Airborne
Laser and Sensors
Attn: Robert Swift, Contract Manager
Telephone 757-824-1432
Wallops Island, VA 2333

GHG Corporation (3/25/03)
Range Instrumentation Services
Attn: Suzanne Daly, Human Resource
Manager
Telephone 281-488-8806
1100 Hercules Suite 290
Houston, TX 77058
NASA/Goddard Space Flight Center (4/3/03)
Career Development & Employee Worklife
Office
Attn: Laura Cochran, Undergraduate Program
Manager
Greenbelt, MD 20771

Northrup-Grumman Information Technology,
Inc. (3/25/03)
Sounding Rockets Program
Attn: Christy Merrill, Human Resource
Manager
Telephone 757-824-1663
Wallops Island, VA 23337

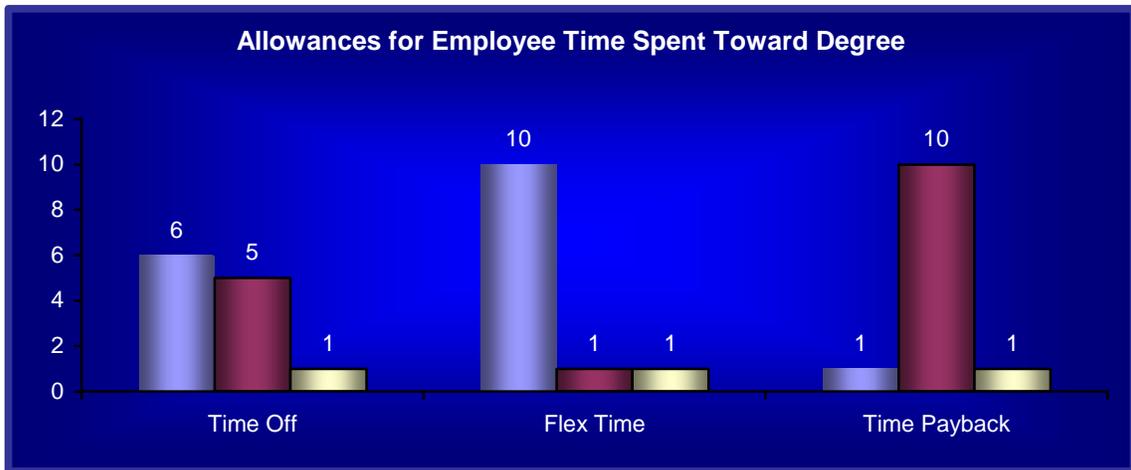
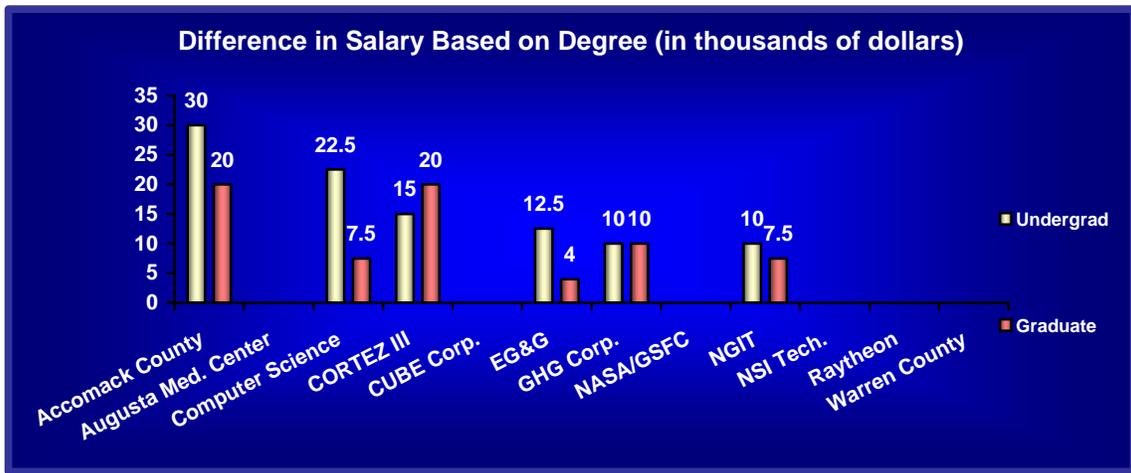
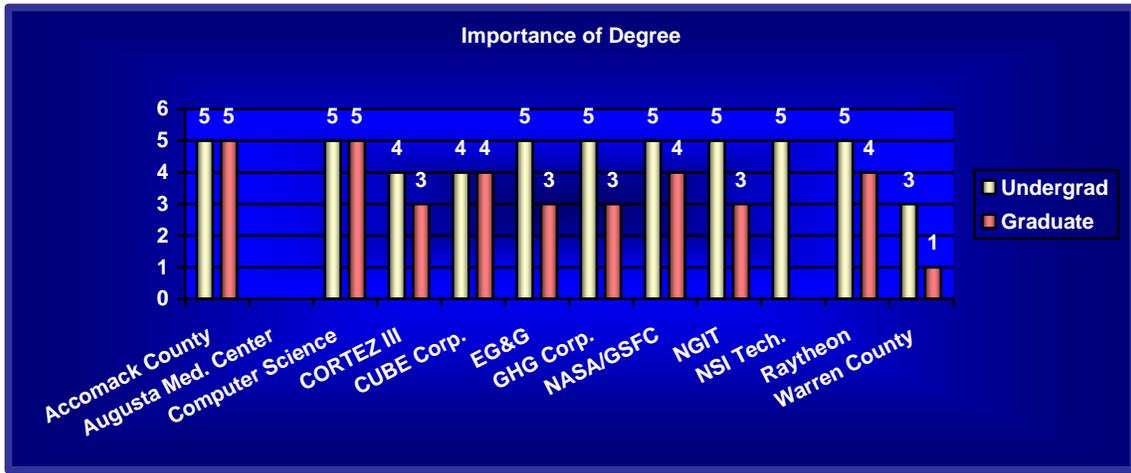
NSI Technology Services, Inc. (3/31/03)
RECERT Services
Attn: Carolyn Judd, Human Resource
Manager
Telephone 301-286-2558
Greenbelt, MD 20771

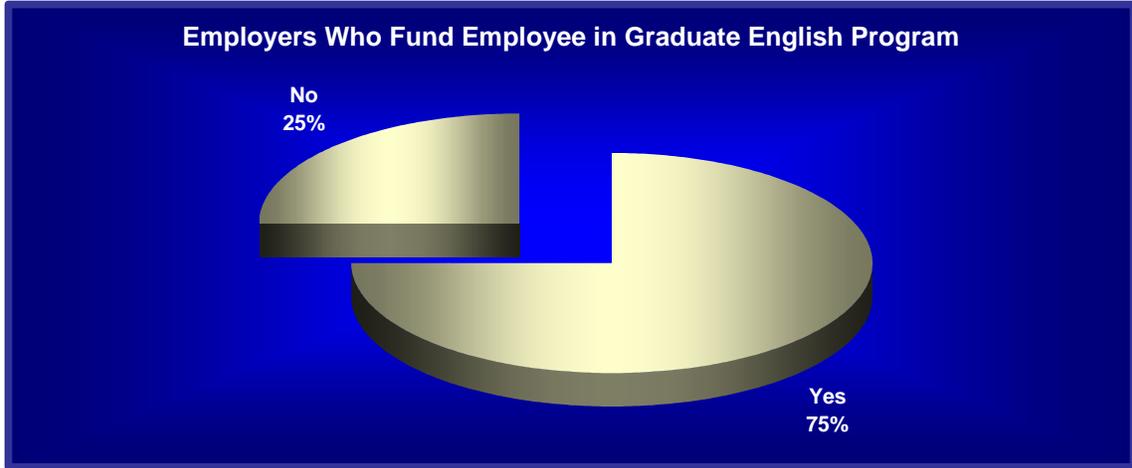
Raytheon Services Company (4/1/03)
Scientific Data Analysis
Attn: Peggy Jester, Contract Manager
Telephone 757-824-2093
Wallops Island, VA 23337

Warren County Government
Attn: Anita Mabie, Director of Personnel
220 N. Commerce Ave.
Front Royal, VA 22630

Appendix K

Results of Business Interviews





Appendix L

Tables - Business Interviews

Business	Time Handling			Requirements	Would Fund Employee in Program
	Time Off	Flex Time	Pay Back		
<i>Accomack County</i>	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
<i>Augusta Med Center</i>	N/A	N/A	N/A	Yes	No
<i>Computer Science</i>	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
<i>CORTEZ III</i>	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
<i>CUBE Corp.</i>	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
<i>EG&G</i>	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
<i>GHG Corp.</i>	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
<i>NASA/GSFC</i>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
<i>NGIT</i>	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
<i>NSI Technology</i>	Yes	No	No	Yes	No
<i>Raytheon</i>	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
<i>Warren County</i>	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No

Business	Importance of Degree		Salary Difference		Tuition Funded, Books, Mileage			
	Under grad	Grad	Under grad	Grad	Fund	Full/Partial	Books	Mile
<i>Accomack County</i>	5	5	30K	20K	Yes	Full	Yes	No
<i>Augusta Med Center</i>	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	Yes	Full	No	No
<i>Computer Science</i>	5	5	22.5K	7.5K	Yes	Full	No	No
<i>CORTEZ III</i>	4	3	15K	20K	Yes	Full	Yes	No
<i>CUBE Corp.</i>	4	4	N/A	N/A	Yes	Full	No	No
<i>EG&G</i>	5	3	12.5K	4K	Yes	Full	No	No
<i>GHG Corp.</i>	5	3	10K	10K	Yes	Full	Yes	No

<i>NASA/GSFC</i>	5	4	N/A	N/A	Yes	Full	Yes	No
<i>NGIT</i>	5	3	10K	7.5K	Yes	Full	Yes	No
<i>NSI Technology</i>	5	N/A	N/A	N/A	Yes	No	Yes	No
<i>Raytheon</i>	5	4	N/A	N/A	Yes	Both	No	No
<i>Warren County</i>	3	1	N/A	N/A	Yes	Full	Yes	No

Appendix M

Student Survey

Please respond to the following statements, feel free to elaborate on your selections on the back of this page:

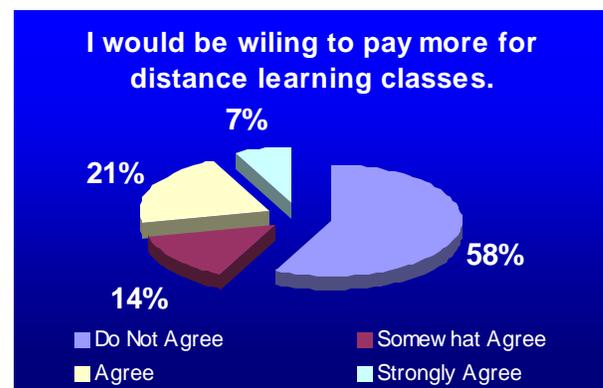
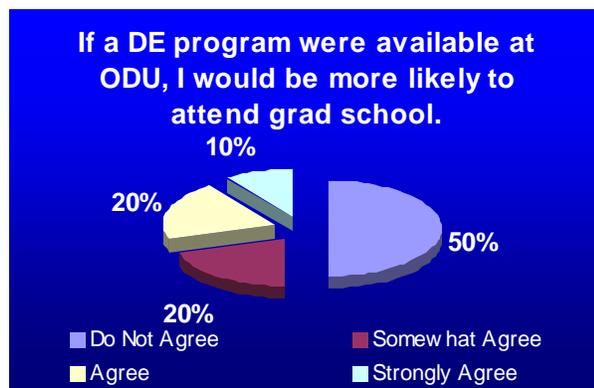
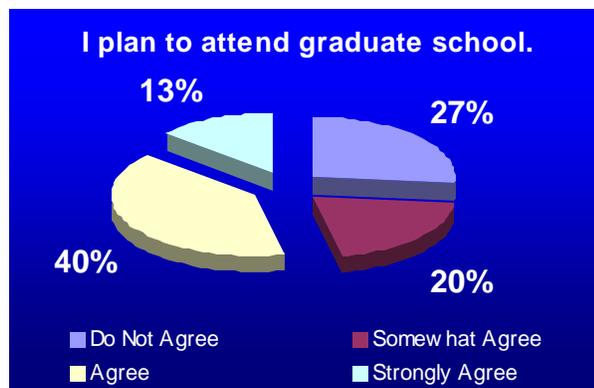
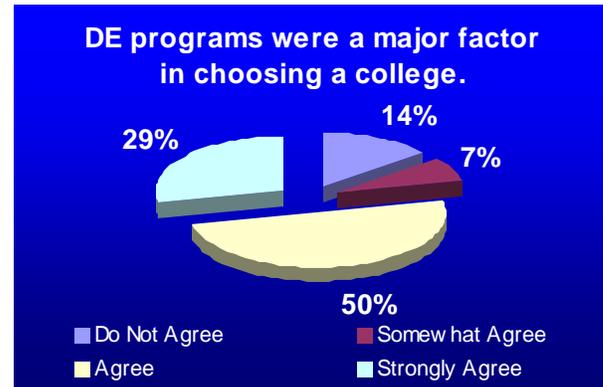
Your current degree program: _____

	Do not agree (No)	Somewhat Agree	Agree (Yes)	Strongly Agree
I am a distance learning student:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
If applicable, do you believe the IDS/Comm writing requirements, courses and assignments have prepared you for your desired profession?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am a graduate student:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am aware of distance learning opportunities offered by ODU and other schools:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Distance learning programs offered are/were a major factor in choosing a college:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I plan to attend graduate school:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am interested in a distance Master of English program:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
If a distance learning program were available at ODU, I would be more likely to attend graduate school:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Without a distance learning program, I would still attend graduate school, but at a different University:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Attending the school where I earned my Bachelor's Degree is a major factor in choosing a graduate school:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I would be willing to pay more for distance learning classes:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I would be willing to spend up to three weeks on campus one semester as part of a distance graduate program:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

What would be your preferred method of course delivery (i.e. video-stream, televised, web-based, etc.)? Why? Please share any additional thoughts or comments on the possibility of a Master's of English distance program being offered at ODU:

Appendix N

Student Survey Results



Appendix O

Amy Grimm Interview (Warren Wilson College)

Phone interview: Warren Wilson College MFA Creative Writing Department

DATE: Friday, March 21, 2003

Interviewer: Barbara J. Stagner

Interviewee: Amy Grimm, Program Assistant

1. How long has your MFA program been in operation?

It was the first low-residency program in US. It started in 1976 under Ellen Bryant White's direction, Goddard College. Warren Wilson College (WWC) housed the program. In 1981, WWC took over the program.

2. Did it start with a pilot program?

Pilot was perhaps when it was under Goddard, but nothing has changed, except that it has grown.

3. The website states that the department accepts 10-15 percent of the applications. How many applications does the department receive in an academic year?

Recently, the acceptance rate has been 8- 10 percent. For the winter 2003 term, 117 people applied. The summer 2003 term has received 217 applications. Last summer (2002), the College received 168 applications. Winter 2002, the college received 93 applications. The summer term is more popular than the winter term.

4. Demographically speaking, what types of students have shown the greatest interest in the program?

The age range is 20 to 60 years old. The average age is 35 years.

Examples of students' professions are teachers, lawyers, doctors, bankers, farmers, technical writers, and journalists.

90 to 95 percent of the admitted applicants have BA/BS degrees, roughly 5 percent have their PhD, 5 percent don't have a four year degree or any higher education behind them.

5. Would you please provide a general overview of how the program works in reference to choosing and attending weekly classes and the residency term?

There are three components to the program: The 10-day residency term, independent study, and faculty supervisors.

The degree requires 60 semester credit hours, and each semester is typically 15 credits. Students are required to put in about 25 hours per week into writing.

The students must be admitted into the program to take the classes, and they must attend the 10-day residency term at the beginning of each semester. However, some applicants who are not accepted into the program are invited to attend the 10-day residency term based on their writing sample.

The summer session is in July, and the winter session is in January. The fifth day (half way), is a free day, whereby the students can get together for social events, private outings, sleep, or catch up on homework.

The 10-day residency term is when students meet their faculty supervisors, set up projects, and decide how often they will send student packets to the faculty supervisor. They also decide what genre will be the course of study (design the curriculum) and set up a bibliography of books that the student must read (15 to 20 titles). While attending the residency term, the students also take the semester's courses, which include faculty-led formal and informal lectures, workshops and seminars, and graduating student led discussions (It is required that each graduating student lead at least one discussion). Each course during the ten-day period has one or two meeting dates.

The independent study aspect is based on the classes taken at the 10-day residency term and the books that are assigned.

There is also a mid-term evaluation form, which the student and supervisor each fill out. The questions pertain to the success of the relationship, what has been sent and the supervisor feedback received. Peter Turchi, program director, reads these evaluations, and acts as a counselor/mediator if there are difficulties between a student and the faculty supervisor.

At the end of each semester, the students must submit bibliographies and annotated bibliographies of the books they have read, a sample of the work they have accomplished for the semester, and an evaluation of their progress and the supervisor.

6. The residency program is 10 days long.

7. Where do students stay during the residency term?

They stay on campus in undergraduate rooms. The terms take place over the winter and summer breaks so that students can use the undergraduate student dorms.

8. Do you think that the residency requirement is a deterrent or an attractor?

It's an attractor for those who want this type of program and a detractor for those who want daily face-to-face interaction or strictly online courses.

9. Have there ever been students that have been unable to fulfill the residency requirement for reasons within or beyond their control? If yes, how has the department solved the problem?

Yes. Those students who are unable to complete a semester because they can't attend the residency term by taking a "leave of absence" and attending the next semester's residency term. The College will approve 2 consecutive leave of absences, but upon the third, the student must go through the application and approval process as if a first time student applying to the program.

10. Aside from the residency term, what modes does the department use for semester courses, i.e. V-Tel, satellite, mail and email correspondence, blackboard...?

Students and faculty supervisors typically use mail and email to communicate. The only course delivery is the 10-day residency term. There are no other methods used for course delivery.

11. Based on your experience and professor/student feedback, do you believe these modes used throughout the semester (aside from the residency term) maximize the teaching/learning experience? In other words, is the system different yet just as effective as daily face-to-face contact, or not as effective as face-to-face contact?

Students admitted into the program are busy and do not desire face-to-face contact. When they want to contact the professors, they do. The 10-day residency term and ongoing communication throughout the semester helps to establish relationships.

12. The department's program has a supervisor assigned to each student. Who are the supervisors in relation to the College?

The supervisors are faculty. They are from around the country and either are administrators/directors or teachers in writing programs, and published authors. There are 20 to 22 every semester and 80 total who teach

some semesters and do not other semesters. They do not teach undergraduate courses. Each faculty supervisor has from three to five students each semester.

What role do the supervisors play?

The supervisors collect student packets roughly every three weeks, and five packets are required from each student per semester. Usually students submit six packets. The supervisors give feedback about the writings, such as by making suggestions, and telling what works and does not work, etc... The packets also include student letters to their supervisors stating progress, problems, successes and evaluation of the supervisor/student relationship and effectiveness. In addition to providing the means to analyzing the students' works, the packets serve to open up communication between the parties. The students get more comfortable with the supervisor as the semester progresses. The letters that are included in the packets do not become part of the students' records. Rather, they are used to help the supervisor evaluate the students' progress and areas that need addressing.

Do these supervisors teach only distance education graduate courses, or do they also teach undergraduate and on-campus only courses?

The supervisors only teach at the graduate level.

13. What methods, if any, does the department employ to encourage or mandate student-to-student interaction, critique and work shopping throughout the semester?

Aside from the 10-day residency term, and sending the packets to their supervisors, it is up to the student to initiate interaction.

14. What are the most important benefits to Warren Wilson's MFA program?

Low-residency/independent study system design meets the needs of those who would otherwise not obtain their MFA.

It is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Universities.

Access to 30 to 80 accomplished faculty and professionals in the writing field through the supervisor/student system, and 10-day residency term. The faculty is generous with their time and really helps students become strong writers.

15. What are the most important drawbacks to Warren Wilson's MFA program?

It has a very competitive admissions process. Low-residency is a deterrent for many interested students. There are administrative tensions because the program is separate from mainstream undergraduate college.

There are also tensions between the undergraduates who relinquish their dorm rooms to the graduate students during the 10-day residency term because the undergraduates do not like having to move their things out for such a short time. In addition, because the MFA English program is the only graduate program at the College, the graduate students are not treated as part of the student population; there is animosity.

16. Is there anything that you would like to add?

Cost is \$5,100.00 per semester for tuition and \$475.00 for the residency term. Each year, the College places an increase in tuition up to a five percent to pay for faculty salary raises and new faculty.

Student scholarships and grants are available, but teaching fellowships are not available.

17. Are there any questions that you have for me?

None.

Appendix P

Site Director Survey Questions

This survey was not used conducted.

1. Have the recent State budget cuts affected how you and your site's staff conduct daily activities?
Yes No

If yes, in what ways? Please explain.

2. If there were satellite time to support additional courses, would your site have the **classroom space** to support two to four additional courses per week?
Yes No

Please explain your response if needed.

3. If there were satellite time to support additional courses, would your site have the **equipment** to support two to four additional courses per week?
Yes No

Please explain your response if needed.

4. If there were satellite time to support additional courses, could your current **staff** support two to four additional courses per week?
Yes No

Please explain your response if needed.

5. Has your office ever received inquiries from the public about graduate English programs?
Yes No

If yes, how many per month?

1-5
6-10
20+

6. Do you have any additional comments?