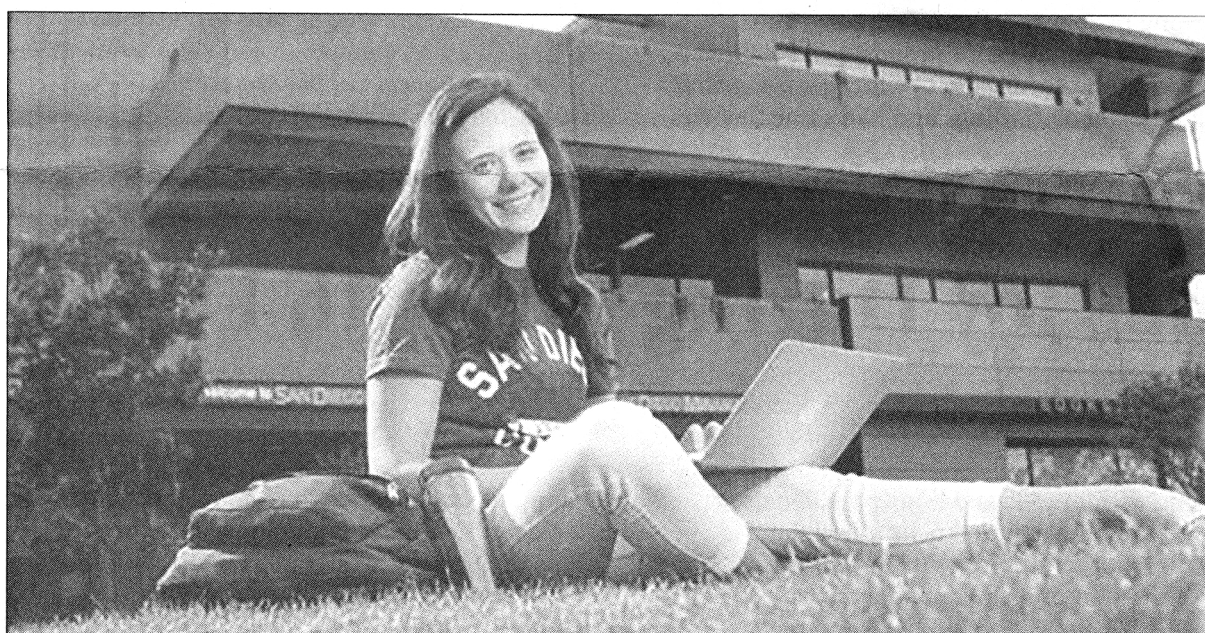


Online Course Offerings Up 21 Percent This Fall



Voice & Viewpoint Newswire

In response to strong student demand, the San Diego Community College District (SDCCD) is increasing the number of online courses by 21 percent from last year when fall classes begin Monday, August 22.

"The San Diego Community College District is committed to ensuring our students have access to the resources needed for them succeed," said Dr. Stephanie Bulger, Vice Chancellor, Instructional Services. "With so many of our students busy working or raising families, it only makes sense to provide them with a larger selection of online courses, which offer greater flexibility in their schedules."

The approximately 20,000 students taking online courses this year at San Diego City, Mesa, and Miramar colleges is up 11 percent compared to last year, and students say they are more than satisfied with their online experiences. In a recent survey, 91 percent of students said they had a good environment in which to study for their online course, and 86 percent said they were comfortable communicating electronically. Ninety-five percent agreed that taking charge of their own learning was very important for their success in school and future career.

"I found it very convenient," said Daron Woods, Associated Student Government President at San Diego City College, who took an online history course over the summer while in Costa Rica. "You still have deadlines and you still have to do the assignments, but you have more flexibility in building your schedule."

Students in the district will have an additional 140 online courses to choose from this year. Among them is an online Personal Financial Management course taught by Assistant Professor David Wilhelm at Miramar College. Forty-three students have already registered for the course and an additional eight students are on a wait list.

"Online offerings are popular because students have the ability to access the material and advance through the course based on their schedule," Wilhelm said. "And the

costs are lower because there is no paper involved and you're using e-textbooks."

Online learning is growing rapidly nationwide, and community colleges are taking the lead in the Golden State by offering thousands of online and distance education courses that attract an estimated 650,000 students annually. Nearly 1.9 million students in public 2-year colleges across the country were enrolled in distance education courses in fall 2013, and more than 28 percent were enrolled exclusively in online courses, according to the U.S. Department of Education.

In 2013, the state launched the Online Education Initiative (OEI), a collaborative effort among California Community Colleges to dramatically increase the number of students earning associate degrees and transferring to four-year colleges or universities.

But a 2015 Public Policy Institute study notes that course design, online interaction, and faculty support are paramount. Wilhelm said online courses may not be for everyone, as some students miss the interaction of a classroom and real-time feedback.

The SDCCD is working with the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee National Research Center for Distance Education and Technological Advancements (DETA), with the goal of fostering student access and success through evidence-based online learning practices and technologies. That partnership is leading to additional professional development opportunities to help keep instructors up to date on current online tools and best pedagogical practices for online learners.

For more information on enrolling this fall at City, Mesa, and Miramar colleges, or for availability of free adult education classes at San Diego Continuing Education, visit www.sdccd.edu.

As the second-largest of California's 72 community college districts, the San Diego Community College District serves approximately 100,000 students annually through three two-year colleges and San Diego Continuing Education. The three colleges, San Diego City College, San Diego Mesa College, and San Diego Miramar College, offer associate degrees and certificates in occupational programs that prepare students for transfer to four-year colleges and entry-level jobs. Mesa College also offers a bachelor's degree in Health Information Management. Continuing Education offers noncredit adult education at six campuses throughout San Diego.