Recommendations from Distance Education Task Force
(Sub Group of the ISIT Committee)

Recommendation Rationale:

The college has a high degree of need when it comes to professional development, expertise and guidance in the context of distance education and the use of technology in learning. This was highlighted in the **October 2006 Evaluation Team Report to ACCJC**, in two of the fourteen recommendations:

5. In order to meet the standard and ensure equitable student access and support at all locations and for all delivery methods, the team recommends the college evaluate student and learning support services and distance education staffing (Standards II.B.1, II.B.3.a,c, II.B.4, II.C.1, and II.C.1.c).

7. In order to meet the standards, the team recommends that the college provide adequate resources to ensure the institution meets the professional development activities needs of its personnel, including activities addressing diversity issues (Standard III.A, III.A.4.b, III.A.4.c, and Standard II.B.3.d).

The above two standards are stated to have been met in our midterm accreditation report. However, upon review of our current offerings and support services, given the wide use of technology and high number of distance education courses, it is possible that the accrediting body may find these to be an ongoing area of weakness for Bakersfield College.

This recommendation meets the **Sloan-C Pillars** of online quality as follows:
- Learning Effectiveness - These recommendations are targeted to improve students success online by providing student centered information and assessment tools, paired with links to existing support structures.
- Cost effectiveness and institutional commitment - By working with existing staff members to create in-house student support tools, Bakersfield College can develop support tools at substantial savings compared to purchasing existing products.
- 5.   Student satisfaction - These recommendations will increase student satisfaction through better preparing them for online courses and encouraging them to take responsibility for their learning experience.

In addition, these recommendations fulfill sections of the **Bakersfield College Mission**, in particular:
- Understanding the needs of our diverse student population
- Responding to student and community needs with efficiency and flexibility

Additionally, as the college turns toward data-driven decision making regarding the offering of courses and the use of various modalities of learning, student success and retention are becoming prominent pieces of data for consideration. Faculty will increasingly need support, guidance and professional development in good teaching practice, which often includes the role of technology in good teaching practice in various modalities.

The use of technology throughout our campus is often implemented under the direction of individual faculty members or, at times, departments. In this scenario, a department or faculty member becomes aware of a technology that they find interesting, and they decide to implement it on a very small level. Both Media Services and Information Services work to support and coordinate the adoption process, but the process often occurs without a strong connection to pedagogical best practices. Without this connection, it is likely that the benefits to student success and retention will be diminished. In addition, we are more likely to end up with overlapping products/services, and more technologies than we can successfully support.

The areas of instructional technology and distance education need an advocate and a champion on campus, who will represent the needs of those areas to campus constituencies and provide a vision and direction for their successful growth to the campus. This is an important part of our success in making the transition to a modern, top-tier community college in California.

Recommendation 1:

As a response to these issues, we propose the creation of the following faculty position:

Faculty Director of Instructional Technology

General Description: Under the direction of the Dean of LRIT, the Faculty Director for Instructional Technology will demonstrate leadership, innovation, and collaboration in working with administration, departments, faculty, staff and students to promote online learning and teaching as well as effective teaching practice using technology; support the development of online courses; coordinate technical training and provide instructional and pedagogical support to faculty teaching online, hybrid, interactive and technology-enhanced on-site classes; and provide leadership for innovation in web-based teaching and learning. This position would be housed within the existing Extended Learning Department, utilizing the existing reporting and budget structure.

Term / Load: This would be a 185 day faculty position, with .2 to be taught in various distance education modalities, .8 to be reassigned to the following duties:

1.1. Provide leadership for coordinating efforts to implement and update the Online Education Plan approved through the college governance process.

1.2. Act as a liaison for online teaching and instructional technology issues between the Academic Senate, the Office of Instruction and the general campus community.

1.3. Coordinate support and resources for faculty to promote Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliance materials used in web-enhanced, hybrid, or online classes.

1.4. Coordinate faculty technology training options, faculty instructional design support, and use of the Technology Learning Center and technology-enhanced classrooms for faculty and staff development.

1.5. Advocate for online teaching and learning in the campus budget and planning process, based upon program reviews / unit plans, the Online Education Plan, and faculty, staff and administrator feedback.

1.6. Support departments and work with the Faculty Union and Administration to develop appropriate and effective tools for evaluating online faculty.

1.7. Serve as a resource and advocate for online-related issues being discussed within Academic Senate and Governance committees.

1.8. Encourage the development and implementation of tools, technologies, and services that empower faculty and enhance teaching and learning, and serves as a point of connection between instructional design issues and the staff of Media and Information Services.

1.9. Apply for grants and seek out funding sources for innovations in online education and instructional technology.

1.10. Maintain currency in online education, distance education and web-based culture at a scholarly and practitioner level.

1.11. Assist in making Bakersfield College and KCCD an active member of associations and organizations promoting innovation in distance education.

1.12. Consult regularly with the campus community and Media and Information Services to determine current technological, resource, and support needs.

1.13. Responsible for organizing college online efforts relative to local, state and federal reports and plans.

1.14. Provide analytics regarding student satisfaction, retention, and student learning for use by the campus community with emphasis on online teaching faculty and departments.

1.15. Assist in the monitoring of demand for and expansion of online course offerings as a basis for college planning.

1.16. Assist in the development of policies and procedures for the distance education program and instructional technology within the participatory governance framework.

1.17. Assist faculty in the development and implementation of best practices for the use of instructional technology.

1.18. Make recommendations to appropriate departments, administrative offices and college governance councils regarding how to best provide support for online education.

1.19. Propose and administer the budget allocations within the existing Extended Leaning budget for activities, services, and operations related to online learning and instructional technology.

Implementation:

This position would be a valuable resource to Bakersfield College, and the KCCD. The devotion of .2 of this faculty member's load to teaching would ensure that this position did not become isolated from student contact or the "teaching faculty" experience. This would provide a real and ongoing connection with the issues that faculty face when dealing with technology, especially in the online environment, as well as an opportunity for this person to pursue practical uses and innovative use of technology in a real world situation.

As an alternative to an 80/20 split of this person's time, a secondary possibility would be a 60/40 split with more time devoted to teaching, but still a significant portion of time devoted to the duties of this position. As the necessity of this position was demonstrated, the percentage of the position devoted to the non-instructional duties could be incremented up to 80%.

The rationale for the 10 extra days above the contract 175 days for faculty is that this person would spend time before and after the start of the semester engaged in seminars, planning and implementing technology. It is anticipated that these extra days would occur mostly prior to the start of the fall term.

At minimum, this position should be considered on a trial basis of one year, with specific, measurable criteria attached to its permanence.

Recommendation 2:

The second recommendation from the ISIT Online Task Force is to provide more targeted support for online students.

1. Develop a student signal alert system.
    Develop a signal system that is readily seen on the front page of each student's class. The signal will inform the student if they are in danger of failing the course, and encourage them to contact their instructor if they are. Depending upon what is possible technologically, the system would incorporate data from assessment scores, course participation, and current grade in the course to provide the student with a current status of their progress in the class.

    Purdue University is currently using a similar system. They have consistently seen 10% increase in A's and B;'s, along with 30% fewer failing grades. There is also a 65% increase in the number of students seeking help when encouraged to do so.

2.   Develop an on-line student orientation system. This would include:
    * Pop-ups that continue to appear until they go through the orientation
    * A greeting using multimedia to "hook" the students into the orientation
    * Brief videos from students providing real world advice on how to survive online
    * An online technical skills assessment tool that can also be accessed by faculty to allow extra support

    The purpose of this recommendation is to inform students of the skills and commitments required to succeed in an online course and to empower them to control their own success online.

Moore, Janet C. (2005). "The Sloan Consortium Quality Framework and the Five Pillars". The Sloan-C, 2005.

Demski, Jennifer, (2011) "Shining a Light on Retention" Campus Technology Vol. 24, No. 7.