FAQ's For University of Hartford
Online (UH Online) Initiative

What is the UH Online Initiative?

In connection with the strategic planning process, the University identified goals to building on its success with professionally orientated graduate programs by adding fully online offerings. Goal Three of the Strategic Plan includes an online initiative to serve a growing population of adult learners who seek fully online graduate degree programs. We plan to launch two programs per year for the fall of 2014, 2015, and 2016 leading to six fully online graduate programs. The initial online offerings will include currently approved face-to-face graduate programs that lend themselves to an online format. In addition, new opportunities identified during market research conducted by STAMATS, a national leader in assessing online opportunities will be explored. The programs themselves will be phased in over time, generally at the rate of two courses in each of the fall, spring, and summer semesters.

What are the expected benefits for faculty and the University overall?

The expected benefits of University of Hartford Online include the following:

- Opportunities to serve a growing population of potential students—the working adult whose personal and professional commitments make a traditionally formatted degree unattractive;

- New tuition revenue for the University necessary to address important University commitments to faculty/staff compensation, investment in the academic core, and the physical plant; and

- Support for faculty who wish to diversify and enrich their teaching experiences by adopting best practice, online pedagogies.

An unexpected benefit that other schools have experienced when entering an online market includes increased enrollments in face-to-face programs due to the addition of marketing efforts targeted to online degree seekers.

What is the expected return from the UH Online initiative?

We will be incrementally launching two programs per year for the next three years (2014-2016). By the time all six programs are fully available online, our net margins are expected to yield $1 million new revenue per year.

How will this initiative work? Who creates the content? Who "owns" the courses?

The Assistant Provost for Online Programs will work with our faculty, chairs, and deans to identify graduate programs that will have a market demand in a fully online environment. Departments will not be required to move into an online format if they are not interested in doing so; this is a voluntary process. Each program will be overseen by a Program Director—preferably a full-time faculty member. The Program Director serves as the academic administrator and is responsible, in collaboration with the Department Chair, for identifying interested and qualified faculty to develop the courses and/or to teach them. The Program Director also handles student academic issues should they arise. The Program Director coordinates the migration of existing curricula into the online environment or, in the case of new programs, leads the program approval process. The Program Director also secures subject matter experts (SME's) to migrate existing or create new courses necessary for the online program. In keeping with our existing process, in place for approximately ten years through the Office of University Programs, the SME's will be paid a stipend of $2,500 to develop the course. Teaching the course can be part of load, an overload or as a course release depending on the needs of the department as assessed by the Department Chair and Dean. Adjuncts might also be used.

Related to who "owns" the materials: what happens if a faculty member who is teaching the online course(s) leaves the University (through moving or retirement) or chooses not to teach the course in a given academic year? What happens to the course content?

Subject Matter Experts (SME's) are paid to develop the course and that same SME may be the person who teaches the course or it may be a different full or part-time faculty member just as occurs in our traditional structure. We routinely cover courses for faculty who are on sabbatical or who retire/resign. So, if the SME leaves the institution it should have no bearing on the course. We would find another person to teach the course, preferably a full-time faculty member. The course content developed by the SME will be property of the University of Hartford.

What is different between the UH Online initiative and what we currently are doing online?

While we have migrated 150 approved face-to-face courses into the online environment, we are currently serving students who come to the University primarily for a face-to-face experience. Our current online efforts provide the convenience of an occasional online class with two exceptions: 1) the Bachelors in University Studies which provides a degree completion online option; and 2) the Masters in Business Administration that allows students to take some or all classes online.

The UH Online initiative targets an entirely new market. By offering fully online graduate programs marketed specifically to the working adult, we will attract new students and new revenues by serving students that would not normally seek a University of Hartford degree.

Additionally, in order to gain the marketing, recruiting infrastructure and expertise we currently lack in house and the horse power to scale up online instructional design services, we have sought the added support of Capital Education. By working with Capital Education (see next question) the University benefits from the following staffing and start up resources which will support the University of Hartford Online initiative:

a) Dedicated recruitment staff.

b) Marketing and budget expertise.

c) A learning management system specifically designed for the online environment that emphasizes a digital learning community.

d) Professional instructional design team to assist our Subject Matter Experts (SMEs).

e) Increased technical support for students and faculty.

f) Best practice advice for keeping students engaged and moving toward completion.

Who is Capital Education?

Capital Education (CapEd) is a provider of services to support adult online learning programs. The company is based in Chicago, Illinois and the President Dr. John Neal has made several visits to campus to discuss ways in which CapEd can be of service to the University in moving more aggressively into offering fully online programs and certificates.

What kinds of services does Capital Education provide for us?

Capital Education offers expertise and a wide range of services. They also absorb online program start up costs, essential for the University of Hartford which lacks the infrastructure or resources to scale up offerings of fully online programs. Specifically CapEd offers:

a) A high quality online learning platform and expertise in creating a "digital campus" experience necessary for student success.

b) Highly trained instructional design professionals who provide strategies to successfully migrate an existing program into a successful online format.

c) The ability to support the University through each phase of the online program (marketing, recruitment, instructional design, technical support, and success benchmarks).

What services will Capital Education (CapEd) not provide?

- CapEd does not accept or deny students.
- CapEd does not set admissions criteria.
- CapEd does not dictate any content or course learning objectives.
- CapEd does not determine what programs we offer.

What are the technical resources available to faculty (i.e. software, hardware and training) needed to successfully migrate to the online campus?

One of the main reasons we chose Capital Education is because its Learning Management System (LMS) provides a robust environment for creating online learning communities. The LMS software is highly intuitive and creates an interactive "digital campus" community that was very important to the faculty/staff group who vetted the various vendors we considered. Their goal was to find a vendor whose approach and LMS most fully reflected our brand—our commitment to challenging students and providing the support they need to be successful.

CapEd provides the training and support for faculty to become comfortable with this LMS and also provides faculty development through their instructional design experts who work one-on-one to share pedagogical approaches that prove most successful to adult learners in the online educational space.

What faculty will teach in these online programs?

Ideally our full-time faculty will teach in these online programs. However, we recognize the limitations of our current faculty resources, and the fact that not all faculty may wish to teach in these fully online programs. When full-time faculty are not available or interested, Program Directors will work with their departments to identify qualified adjuncts, as we do in our face-to-face programs.

How will faculty be compensated if they become involved in the University of Hartford Online initiative?

Creating the University of Hartford Online will require a commitment of time and energy if we are to provide the kind of high-quality online presence that makes us competitive.

Faculty will be compensated for course design using the same system we have in place currently - $2,500 per course with added compensation (or teaching load credit) for teaching the course. Program Directors, Deans and Department Chairs will work with faculty to determine if teaching for the University of Hartford Online will be part of load, an overload or if adjuncts will be hired. In this new model, Program Directors will be compensated as well.

What is the process for selecting which programs might go online?

Program ideas may be generated at a variety of levels – faculty, chair, and deans. Currently we are looking at our existing face-to-face programs, as well as new programs, taking into consideration recommendations from Foundation of the Future and initial market research completed by STAMATS, a national leader in assessing online opportunities. Program approval processes will rely strongly on market research and analysis of the adult market in relation to regional demand for specific programs.

How will faculty be assessed?

Faculty teaching online will be assessed in the same way, as much as possible, that they are assessed in the face-to-face environment. There will be student evaluations that will be conducted online. As additional measures for teaching effectiveness are proposed and adopted for face-to-face courses, they will be adopted or adapted for the online environment.

How will success be measured? The numbers of students in program? The net margin for each program? Or the overall net margin? In other words, would we continue an individual program that doesn't "make money" yet could be a lead into another program that will be profitable?

All of the above factors will be used to measure program success. The most important factor, however, will be net margin.