BCcampus Service Review

Applied Business Technology Collaborative Online Program

BCcampus

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Prepared by BCcampus, November 2016

The purpose of this service review is to document a brief history of the Applied Business Technology Collaborative Online Program, examine the role of BCcampus in the program, detail the BCcampus resources used, and make recommendations regarding our future involvement with the program and its member institutions. This review is intended only as an examination of the experiences of BCcampus staff, the support services provided by BCcampus, and the investment the organization has made in the program, not the experience of coordinators, students or faculty.
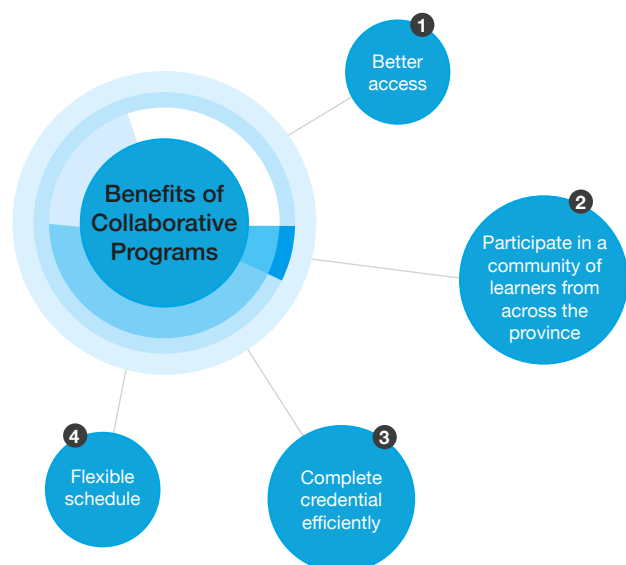
Acknowledgements

From its inception, there have been many champions and advocates for the program who have worked tirelessly to ensure students had access to the learning opportunities they needed. We are very grateful for that commitment. Much of our work has been with the program coordinators within the member institutions. We hope you are as proud as we are of what was accomplished. Our sincere thanks to all program coordinators past and present from:

- Camosun College
- College of New Caledonia
- Douglas College
- North Island College
- Northwest Community College
- Okanagan College

- Selkirk College
- Thompson Rivers University
- Vancouver Community College
- Vancouver Island University
- Yukon College

In addition, our special thanks to Terrie McAloney, who has been so dedicated to the program on behalf of BCcampus and to Elaine Baird and Paula Gaube, our Helpdesk staff who eased the way for thousands of students over the course of the program.

Purpose of the Program

For many years, BCcampus has worked with institutions to reduce costs and create system efficiencies using collaborative programs aligned with shared service models. These programs, the Applied Business Technology online program and the Information and Communication Technologies program use shared services to integrate information and educational technology in ways that maximize the service that institutions can provide to their students.

Benefits of Collaborative Programs

1. Better access
2. Participate in a community of learners from across the province
3. Complete credential efficiently
4. Flexible schedule

BCcampus and partner institutions coordinate and deliver the collaborative programs, and use BCcampus services to:

- Optimize the benefits of collaborative and partnership program and service delivery
- Minimize business process redundancy
- Enable securely supported admission/registration processes that are as seamless as possible for students
- Support coordinated recruitment, articulation, secure exchange of student information system (SIS) data, and FTE reporting
- Complement collaborative and partnership program arrangements between institutions
- Provide shared access to learning technologies

History

Established more than a decade ago, the Applied Business Technology Collaborative Online Program has served thousands of students over the course of its delivery to date. The program was intended to create an opportunity for collaboration and delivery of learning by institutions that might not otherwise be in a position to offer the full program on their own. The program was also designed to remove access as a barrier to education for students in rural and remote areas.

Collaborative Program Roles and Responsibilities

Collaborative Program Roles

Each institution participating in the collaborative program has four basic user roles in the Online Collaborative Program websites, hosted by BCcampus.

1. Home Institution (HI) Coordinators are responsible for registering or cancelling students in courses. These actions generate registration/cancellation emails sent to the students.
2. Teaching Institution (TI) Course Managers are responsible for setting up and confirming or cancelling course sections. These actions change the Course Schedule visible on the collaborative program websites.
3. Instructors teach online courses in Desire2Learn (D2L) and grade students on their class list.
4. Students are uploaded to their classes four days before the start date of the course, as outlined in the Welcome Letter email.

BCcampus responsibilities for Online Collaborative Programs and Services include:

- Maintaining a coordinator role
- Implementing, maintaining and supporting the required educational technology services (e.g., Learning Management System, web conferencing)
- Housing master course shells and providing access to online course team leaders, maintaining a list of online course team leaders and maintaining the listserv for online coordinators and instructors
- Providing semi-annual reporting on FTEs, teaching sections, and registrants for individual institutions, and comparatively, for the online collaborative's semi-annual meetings
- Providing BCcampus systems and processes necessary to exchange institutional data appropriately
- Providing final percentage grades to Home Institutions
- Providing access to the Faculty Lounge for all instructors of online course offerings
- Coordinating the development of the online course schedule (Master Plan) for each academic year
- Maintaining web sites
- Maintaining a help line that provides technical support to coordinators, instructors and students

The participating institution responsibilities related to online collaborative programs include:

- Attend online coordinator articulation meetings
- Participate fully as both a Teaching Institution and a Home Institution
- Work toward maintaining a balance between the number of students taught internally in online sections and the number of students referred for instruction to ABT/OA online sections being taught externally
- Provide course team leadership for an appropriate proportion of online course offerings and provide regular ongoing and major periodic course revisions as required
- Adopt course outlines developed by the online collaborative
- Make revisions to course outlines as agreed by the online collaborative
- Retain all tuition fees collected
- Support online students—exam invigilation, textbook availability, and other support services
- Apply academic policies to all Home Institution students

Responsibilities for institutions participating in collaborative service delivery include:

- Meet appropriate membership requirements
- Provide appropriate staffing to the service as set out in commitment documents OR provide appropriate compensation
- Provide a yearly Service Support fee as determined by the Advisory Committee and set out in the cost-sharing model
- Have adequate resources available for learners

Members of the collaborative agree to:

- Provide instruction to students from member colleges/universities registered in Online Collaborative courses
- Adhere to procedures set out by the online collaborative
- Provide access to register students in course offerings

Impact

The ABT program has been successful in providing relevant learning to students across the province of BC, enabling access to education where it previously did not exist. The ability to meet the learning needs of a geographically dispersed population is one of the key elements that, for BCcampus, has driven our desire to continue to support the program.

The program modeled a proof of concept in innovative program delivery and the use of educational technologies to create more access to learning opportunities for all students. Both the successes and challenges of the program created many opportunities for learning provincially, nationally and internationally as it was shared by BCcampus staff and others at conferences and events.

The institutional collaboration aspect of the ABT program created and fostered community between institutions. It gave academic, administrative and IT staff a reason to be connected to each other, sharing new learning and helping each other solve complex problems.

The twelve B.C. post-secondary institutions that have participated in the ABT Collaborative program in a home and/or teaching institution role are:

- Camosun College
- Capilano University
- College of New Caledonia
- College of the Rockies
- Douglas College
- North Island College

- Northwest Community College
- Okanagan College
- Selkirk College
- Thompson Rivers University
- Vancouver Community College
- Vancouver Island University

By enabling students in each of these geographic regions access to the ABT program, the member institutions improved students' ability to engage in relevant learning in their own communities.

Investment

The BCcampus investment in the program has spanned our organization, drawing resources from our IT department, administration, and program coordinators. Other costs have included hardware infrastructure and support, and software licensing. The table below provides an annual average cost for these services:

Item	Average Annual Cost
IT infrastructure and support	$27,500
Software licensing	$75,300
Software development and support	$32,500
Helpdesk	$20,000
Program administration and coordination	$50,700
Total	$193,000

Challenges

There have been a number of challenges associated with hosting, maintaining and facilitating the online collaborative program model. These challenges have included a lack of: human and financial resources, building and maintaining consensus regarding participating institution responsibilities and practices and intra-institutional support for enhancing the current model.

Human and Financial Resources

BCcampus has subsidized the ABT program through the costs detailed in the table above on average $193,000 annually. As a small organization, this accounts for a significant portion of our budget. Directing our funds in this way has prevented us from engaging in further innovation in this and other areas since we did not have the additional resources necessary.

Building and Maintaining Consensus

The model was designed with both home and teaching institution roles to promote a shared responsibility for enrolling and teaching students among the participating institutions. Over the years, there has been an imbalance in this relationship with some institutions primarily enrolling students, but not providing equal support as a teaching institution. BCcampus was often in a position of acting as mediator when conflicts arose.

In addition, there were a number of key issues that required ongoing review in order to obtain alignment between institutions, to include: admissions practices, registration processes, residency requirements, grading and transcripts, academic rules and regulations, course section management, and FTE allocation and reporting.

Supporting Model Enhancements

Over the years of the program, BCcampus staff created ways of automating many of the tasks required to operate the collaborative program, for example automated welcome letters and notifications to students and instructors. Other tasks necessitated manual work by BCcampus and institutional faculty and staff, and in some cases the same task was completed multiple times in multiple systems.

2010-2011

In 2010, The Ministry of Advanced Education and BCcampus reviewed a request for ABT process automation as requested by the Program Coordinators participating in the ABT Online Collaborative Program. At this time, the Ministry of Advanced Education required that BCcampus obtain approval from the BC Registrars Association (BCRA) before implementing enhancements to the existing model. BCcampus reviewed the model and the challenges put forth by the ABT Program Coordinators and submitted recommendations to the BC Registrars Association (BCRA). These recommendations did not capture agreement among institutional registrars. The institutional registrars requested BCcampus assemble a working group with members appointed by the BCRA to address the recommendations and review additional requirements. A new working group was assembled and in 2011 this group submitted recommendations to BCRA, but again there was no agreement among BCRA members on these recommendations.

2012-2013

In 2012, Camosun College and Vancouver Island University requested that all parties revisit the ABT Online Collaborative Program Model. BCcampus assembled a new working group that included ABT Program Coordinators and BCRA-appointed representatives. BCcampus captured this Working Group's recommendations and put forward a proposal to BCRA on April 5, 2013:

 "Collaborative Program Model Proposal - Phase 1: Registration and Grade Enhancements" to include:

- Registration: from a redundant student registration process in two systems to a one-time registration process
- Waitlists: from a side-of-the desk managing of multi-institutional course section waitlists outside of the system to a shared, online process for handling waitlists
- Grading: from a redundant student final grades entry in three systems to a one-time grading process
- Reporting: from a cumbersome manual handling of data to an automated process for the timely sharing of data

The BCRA voted unanimously on the following motion:

"BCRA is unable to support the collaborative model presented today. BCRA encourages BCcampus to concentrate efforts on development of an electronic letter of permission for Visiting Students which would be scalable beyond the Applied Business Technology collaborative program."

Due to the lack of support from BCRA to continue to work with the existing Online Collaborative Program Model, no further enhancements were made. This result had an impact on the current institutional needs that were expressed by the ABT Coordinators and the BCRA- appointed members of the working group, and also impacted BCcampus' longer-term vision to explore innovative approaches in future phases that would develop the model in a more learner-centric way.

While this model was a very successful grassroots effort, it was later revealed that intra-institutional collaboration did not occur in the early stages of development of the program. What emerged in 2013 as a lack of translation or alignment between the model and current registrarial policies and practices may have been magnified due to the perceived lack of intra-institutional consultation in the early stages of development.

BCcampus Innovation mandate

BCcampus is tasked by the Ministry of Advanced Education with helping institutions pilot and evaluate innovations in teaching, learning and educational technology. When the ABT Collaborative Program was started, it was indeed a very innovative approach to meeting the needs of geographically distributed students. Since that time, we have new opportunities to improve student learning and access to learning in different ways. Using the affordances of new educational technologies and new pedagogical approaches, we can enhance the student experience and create efficiencies and economies of scale in BC. By continuing to focus on the current model, we reduce the resources we have to develop new, more effective ones.

Recommendation

BCcampus recommends:

- That the ABT program be reviewed in the context of its academic value, the experiences of coordinators, students and faculty, whether individual institutions met their objectives, and whether the goals of the collaboration were achieved for members. This review should include both external reviewers and those who have participated in the program.

- That the current model for the collaborative programs be reviewed in the context of available resources, new pedagogies and technologies, academic needs, and support structures. Through this thorough examination, lessons learned may be applied in the conception of new models.

- That any new model takes into consideration the lessons learned from the current model, including those related to ensuring broad consultation and collaboration with all parties deemed critical to success and the creation of a scalable, sustainable model.

Next Steps

- Given the findings of this review, BCcampus can no longer continue to support the ABT Collaborative Program in the way currently provided.

- As of November 10, 2016 we are officially giving notice that we will no longer support the program under the current model. Because the terms of our memoranda of understanding with the institutions states April to April as the one-year period, our notice period will officially begin on April 1, 2016.

- BCcampus will continue to provide support and coordination to member institutions as we sunset the program, including facilitating new IT infrastructure upgrades.

- Should the institutions desire it, BCcampus will offer support in the facilitation of a more comprehensive program review and the conceptualization and piloting of a new model.