



Distance Education Courses FY 2000 – FY 2002 University System of Georgia

In the University System of Georgia, a distance education course is defined as one in which more than 50 percent of instruction is delivered through one or more forms of distance technology, and in which the instructor of the course and the students are separated by time and/or geographic location. University System of Georgia institutions have been delivering an increasing number of courses through distance technology since the mid- to late-1990s.

For the last three fiscal years, detailed data on distance education courses have been collected through the Curriculum Inventory Reporting system (CIR). Although still a small proportion of all types of courses, distance education has been growing rapidly in the University System of Georgia. In FY 2002, distance education courses were offered by 31 of the 34 USG institutions, and they generated 113,881 semester credit hours (SCH) for the USG funding formula. This represents 2.03 percent of the total FY 2002 credit hours produced in the USG, up from 1.80 percent in FY 2001.

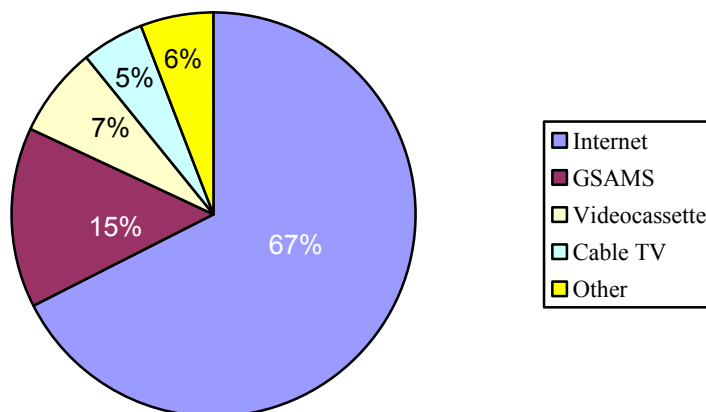
The following is an analysis of how distance education activity has developed over the last three years.

Distance Education by Technology Used

An examination of distance education (DE) in the University System of Georgia begins with a look at the technologies used in its delivery. In FY 2002, ten separate categories were used to classify distance instruction in the University System, including videocassette, GSAMS, two-way interactive video, cable television, Internet, other network, print-based materials, other technologies, CD Rom, and multiple technologies. Of those ten technologies, four accounted for 94.1 percent of the total credit hours produced by DE courses, as shown in the following pie chart.

The Internet is the dominant delivery modality in distance education. More than two-thirds of all DE credit hours generated by USG institutions in FY 2002 were delivered via the Internet. GSAMS, a two-way interactive video system, was a distant second in DE delivery in FY 2002. The GSAMS share of total SCH output has declined in the last three years from 28 to 15 percent, as use of the Internet has expanded from 53 to 67 percent.

Total Credit Hours by Predominant Technology Used

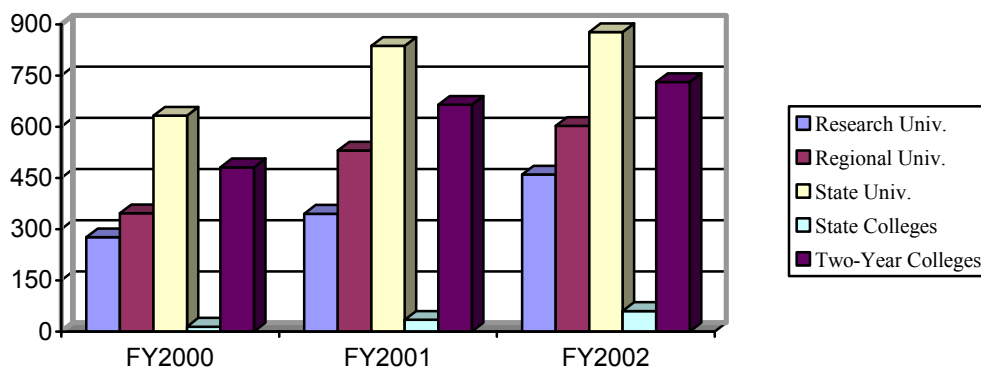


Number of DE Course Sections

The total number of distance education course sections taught in the University System has increased from 1,749 in FY 2000, to 2,410 in FY 2001, to 2,730 in FY 2002, an increase of 56.1 percent over the last three years. Those DE course sections represented 1.8 percent, 2.4 percent, and 2.6 percent, respectively, of all course sections taught in the University System in those years.

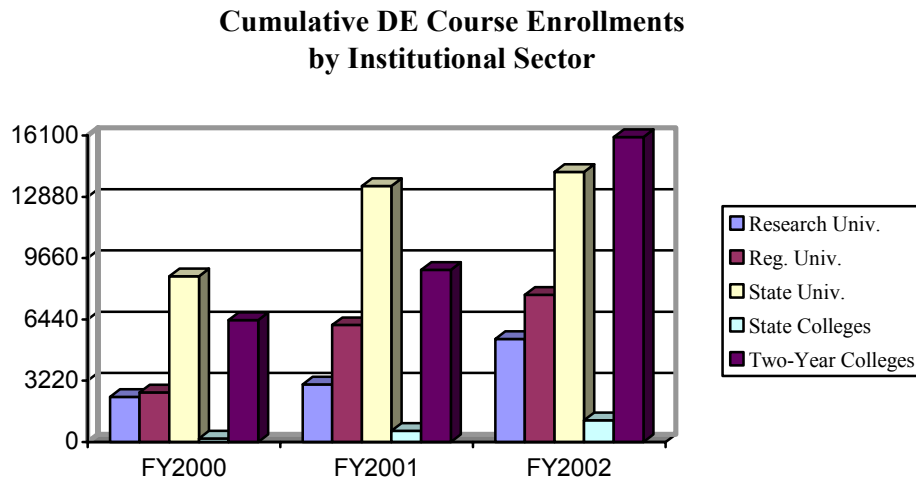
The number of DE courses vary by sector within the USG. The following chart shows total DE courses by institutional sector for each of the last three fiscal years. While the largest number of DE course sections was offered by the state universities, the regional universities offered the highest DE proportion of all courses offered in that sector, 5.13 percent.

DE Course Sections Offered by Institutional Sector



Total Enrollments in DE Course Sections¹

Cumulative USG enrollments in distance education course sections also increased between FY 2000 and FY 2002. Total DE course enrollments grew from 20,245 in FY 2000 to 32,243 in FY 2001 to 39,979 in FY 2002, or from 1.12 to 1.8 to 2.05 percent of total USG course enrollment. The overall rate of increase in distance education enrollment was 97.5 percent in the last three years. The following chart shows total DE enrollments by institutional sector for each of the last three fiscal years.



Course enrollments in distance education have grown more rapidly than DE course sections offered, so the average class size is also increasing. The table below compares the three-year average enrollment in non-DE course sections with the corresponding average enrollment in distance education courses. It shows that the average section size is smaller in DE than in non-DE courses, in each institutional sector and for the System as a whole.

Average Enrollment Per Course Section Non-DE and DE, FY2002		
	Students/ Non-DE <u>Section</u>	Students/ DE Section
Research Universities	17.3	9.8
Regional Universities	20.5	11.1
State Universities	18.4	15.5
State Colleges	19.0	17.5
Two-Year Colleges	19.3	17.4
USG Averages	18.4	14.0

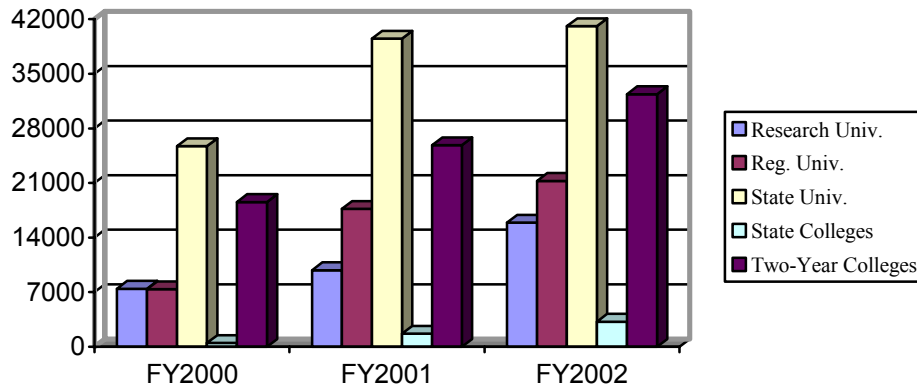
¹ Enrollment in the CIR system is measured as the cumulative total of seats occupied by students registered in course sections for both DE and non-DE delivery, not as individual, unduplicated headcount students.

However, note that these averages can be misleading, as directed study in upper division courses (with just one student per course) is counted as a course section just like a lecture class.

Total Credit Hours Generated in DE Courses

Total credit hours generated by distance education courses also increased between FY 2000 and FY 2002. The DE total increased from 59,593 SCH in FY2000, to 94,531 SCH in FY2001, to 113,881 SCH in FY2002, a three-year increase of 91.1 percent. The DE proportion of total USG credit hours generated also increased, from 1.16 percent in FY 2000 to 1.8 percent in FY 2001 to 2.03 percent in FY 2002. The following chart shows credit hour production by sector for the same three-year period.

Total DE Credit Hours
by Institutional Sector



The data show that 55 percent of all DE credit hours are generated by the regional and state university sectors, compared to 41 percent of total USG credit hours. State colleges and two-year colleges produce 31 percent, compared to 20 percent of total USG credit hours.

Change in DE, FY2000 to FY2002

The growth of distance education in the University System of Georgia can best be understood in terms of the share of the University System’s total academic productivity. The following table shows the DE proportions of total USG output, i.e., DE and non-DE instruction combined, for the three measures discussed above: courses, enrollment and credit hours.

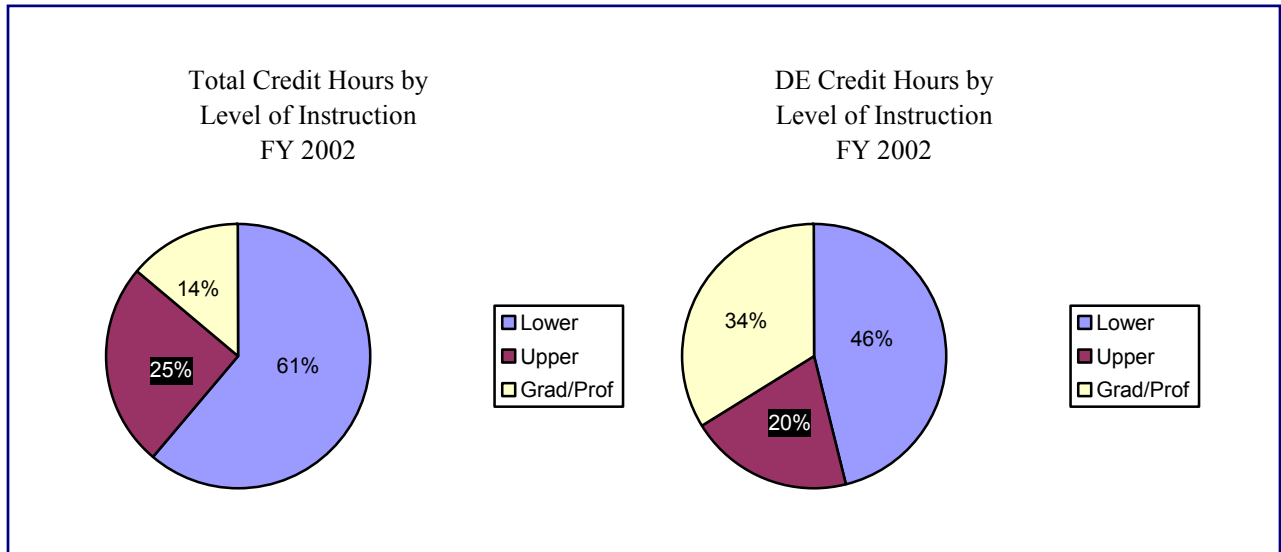
**DE Percentage of Total
USG Instructional Output**

	<u>Courses Offered</u>	<u>Total Enrollment</u>	<u>Total Credit Hours</u>
FY 2000	1.76%	1.12%	1.16%
FY 2001	2.38%	1.76%	1.80%
FY 2002	2.60%	2.05%	2.03%

Distance Education by Level of Instruction

Credit hours generate budget dollars differentially by level of instruction in the USG funding formula, i.e., by lower division, upper division, and graduate/professional levels. The manner in which distance education credit hours are distributed by instruction level compared with the corresponding distribution of all credit hours produced in the University System is shown below.

A significantly larger number of hours is delivered via distance education at the graduate/professional level than for traditional delivery, generating relatively more revenue for the University System through the USG funding formula. Distance education's graduate/professional proportion has increased from 28 to 34 percent since FY 2000.



Conclusion

The data from the USG Curriculum Inventory Report show that distance education as an alternative form of instructional delivery is growing rapidly. In just three years, the production of credit hours through the delivery of courses at a distance has almost doubled, although distance education still represents a very small proportion of total USG instructional output.

The continued growth of distance education, especially if graduate/professional level credit hour production continues to predominate, has implications for USG funding. In addition, how DE continues to develop, especially which program areas and levels of students it serves, has implications for the USG and for institutional academic planning, student access, budget allocation and other University System policy issues.

Although the output of distance education in the USG is still small, it is growing at a rapid rate. With further curricular and technological developments, continued and accelerating growth can probably be expected in the next few years.

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Copies of detailed distance education reports are available on the USG Office of Strategic Research and Analysis
Web site at: <http://www.usg.edu/admin/planning/cir/reports/>.