Distance Education at What Price?

by **Brian M. Morgan**

L ook before you leap. Many institutions don't fully understand the impacts of providing distance education. Those impacts, in particular the tangible and perceived costs, are important to access before venturing into online education.

Colleges and universities can use my report, *Is Distance Learning Worth It? Helping to Determine the Costs of Online Courses,* and its companion Web site to learn the areas that must be evaluated, what effects online courses may have on an institution, what costs are involved in establishing this type of venture, and what costs and possible problems may be encountered with ongoing course offerings.

What often happens is higher education institutions begin offering online courses without realizing the expense (1) to get started and (2) in the long run. To be successful, institutions must properly plan, convert material, and evaluate their distance education offerings. Nonetheless, some institutions will never have the resources to be able to do this themselves without considering a partnership.

The Web site affiliated with my report provides a worksheet that allows individuals to enter data specific to their institution and generate an estimate of costs associated with online courses. This site was developed from research data gathered during the generation of the report. By attempting to account for all costs involved, the site can provide an institution with an overview of the costs of introducing and maintaining online courses.

Online education may not even be the approach that some wish to take, but that is a decision that can't be made until all the factors—including the financial ones—are weighed.

The full report and interactive worksheet are available online at www.marshall.edu/distance/. *e*

Brian M. Morgan (brian.morgan@marshall.edu) is assistant professor in the Integrated Science and Technology Program at Marshall University.

How Distance Education Affects Faculty Compensation

by **Gary A. Berg**

T he popularity of distance learning is surging in higher education. One 1995 study indicated that a third of higher education institutions offered distance education courses and that a quarter planned to do so in the next three years.[1] With the majority of these courses being developed by faculty members, this represents a potential change in traditional faculty roles. If distance learning courses reduce or increase faculty compensation, this is likely to have long-term effects on faculty and, by extension, the whole of higher education.

My paper in the June 2000 issue of the *Journal of Asynchronous Learning Networks (JALN),* "Early Patterns of Faculty Compensation for Developing and Teaching Distance Learning Courses," reports an investigation into direct and indirect compensation (including royalties, training, and professional recognition) for this effort on the part of faculty members. Economic models for distance learning are also examined with respect to attempts to reduce labor costs. The primary questions this paper attempts to answer are: What are the current policies