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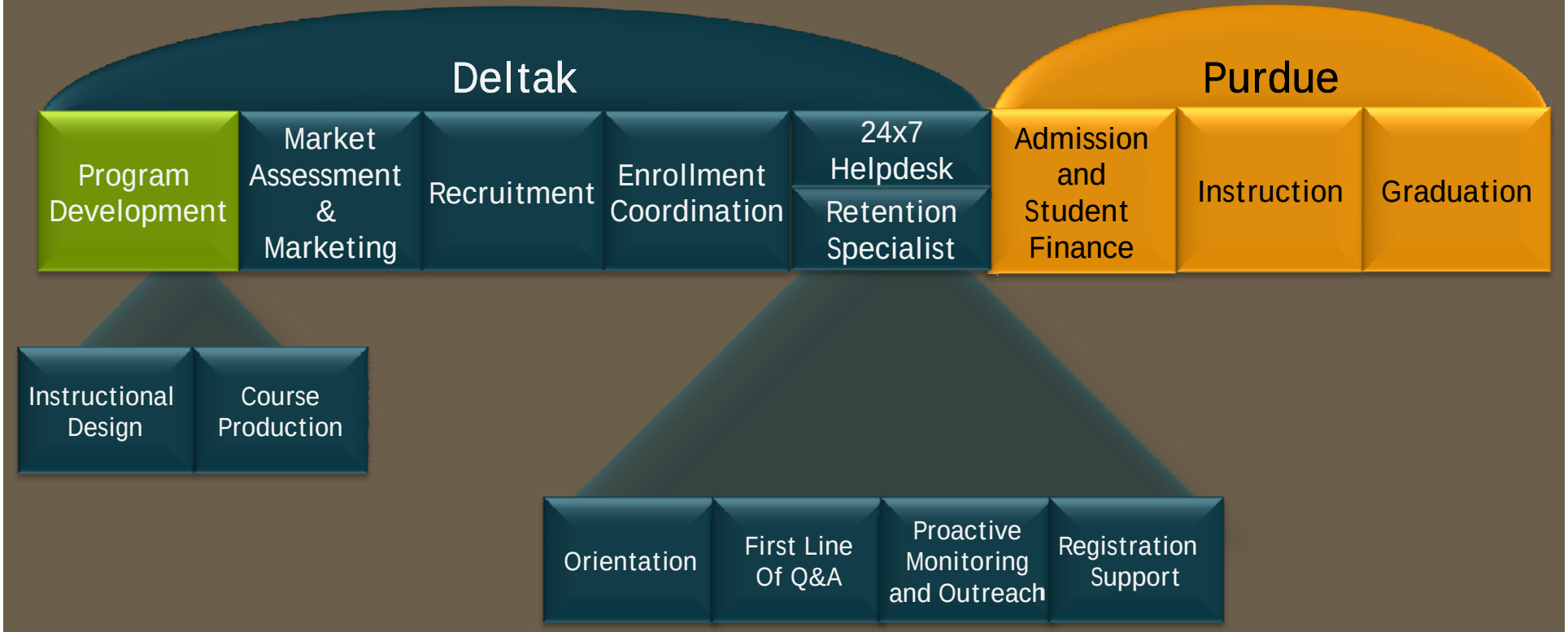
Scaling Online Learning in Tandem: Partnering with an Educational Services Company to Launch Online Degrees

November 7, 2012 | UPCEA Seminar | New Orleans, LA

Panelists

- **Michael Eddy,** Purdue University, Assistant Dean, Purdue Extended Campus
- **Robin Cunningham,** Purdue University, Associate Director, Purdue Extended Campus
- **Katie Zapata,** Deltak, VP Partnership Operations
- **Marin Moder,** Deltak, Operations Manager

Partnership Model



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Partner Selection

- Provost's Task Force on Online Learning
- Recommendation that Purdue engage with a third-party partner to jump-start its entrance into online degree programs
- Creation of a vendor selection process involving University Purchasing and a campus-wide selection committee
- Distinguishing characteristics of Deltak: quality of people, institution-specific recruiters and student support

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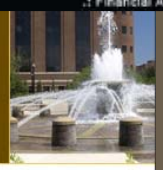

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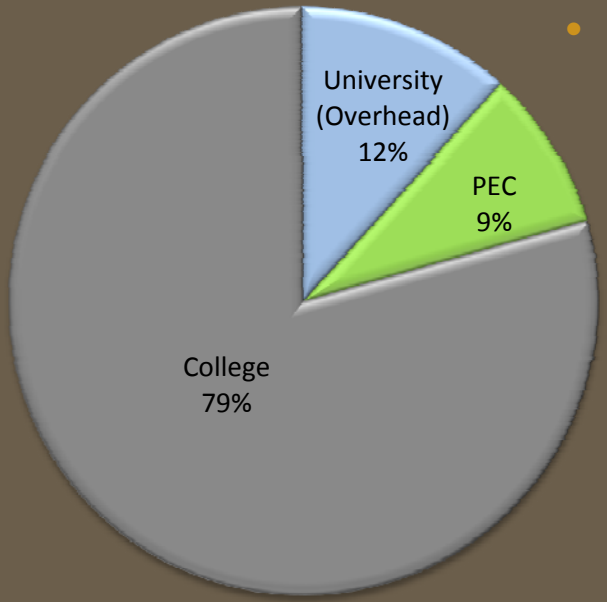
Student Recruitment

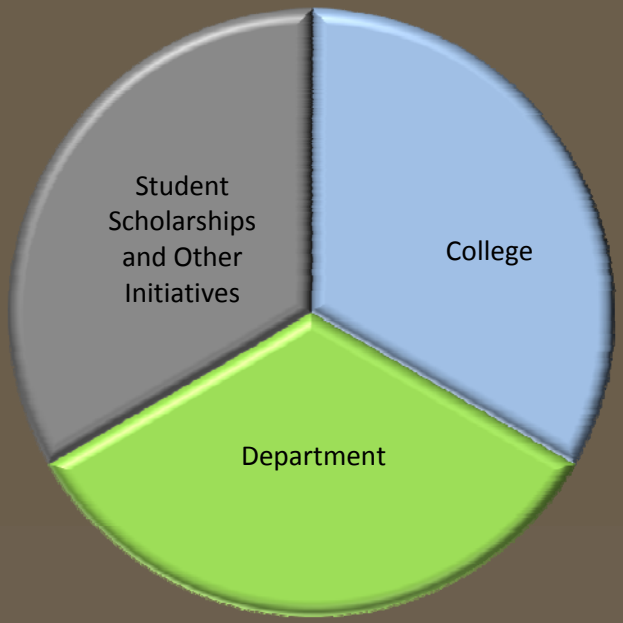
- Dedicated Resources
  - Deltak admissions counselors are dedicated to ***one*** partner
  - Team is extension of your school and become experts on your brand, values and mission
- Program Experts
  - Admissions team trained by faculty on program
  - Trained on qualifications and requirements
  - Team becomes experts in industry and what students are looking for
- Application/Admissions Process
  - Deltak team provides complete application files of qualified students for faculty review
  - Faculty review files on rolling basis – used to review 2x/year
  - University owns admissions decision
  - Deltak supports all logistics from initial inquiry to registration

Financial

Purdue's share of revenue is divided as follows:

- University policy requires online programs to be administered by Purdue Extended Campus; University and PEC retain administrative fees
- Remaining revenues transferred to college where program is housed
- Colleges determine how revenues are distributed. College of Education
  - Departmental expenses are paid first (faculty, limited term lecturers, grad students)
  - Remaining split:





- At steady state the program will generate over $500K annually for the College

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Access to Systems / Security

Providing access to university systems and student data to a third-party is a major challenge for security-conscious institutions. Examples:

- Access to student services system (Banner)
- Access to student data
- Access to graduate application system (ApplyYourself)

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Disrupting the Status Quo

Working through the existing institutional model of distance learning to a new paradigm

- Non-traditional programs
  - 16-week terms
  - Cohort/Blended
  - Once-a-year admissions
  - 20-25 students per cohort
- New online Programs
  - 8-week terms
  - Totally online
  - 3 admissions per year
  - Scaling up an order of magnitude
- Buy-in from stakeholders
  - Faculty: reviewing applicant files more often; teaching in 8-week terms, and working with more students
  - Graduate School: no longer static deadlines for application dates; electronic signatures for admissions decisions; electronic transcripts
  - ID Card Office: electronic submission of ID pictures

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Student Support

Important to consider how policies and procedures may need to be adjusted to support online students

- Administrative
  - Registrar, Financial Aid, Bursar, Academic Calendar
- Technology
  - Helpdesk, Library, Books, Course Materials
- Support
  - New Student Orientation, Career Services, Tutoring, Graduation
- Academics
  - Student Interactions with Faculty & Academic Advisors

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Program Selection

- Identifying degree programs that have potential, resources, and desire to go to scale

- Limiting factors

  --Deans who preferred to continue to work with in-house resources and were satisfied with current levels of enrollments

  --Insufficient faculty resources to go to scale

  --Insufficient market to go to scale

- Approval processes within the University and in state government cause significant delay (Concentrations vs new degrees; approval to go online)

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Academic Quality

- Balance commitment to quality vs. expected faculty time / resource
- Common Challenges:
  - Lack of clear program goals and standards
  - Lack of incentives/release time/comp for quality work
  - No culture of inspection and accountability around course quality or effective teaching
  - Faculty resistance
    - to online teaching
    - to partnership
    - to working within operational systems and timelines
    - to instruction as a “team effort” – used to autonomy
- Need strong leadership at Dean / Department Head / Program Chair levels to support process

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Lessons Learned

- Have the support of upper administration to engage with a partner and employ a partner selection process that is transparent, standard, and broad-based.
- Ensure that your institutional marketing unit is fully engaged with your partner.
- Pay attention to your partner's recruiting staff; they are the face of your institution to prospective students.
- Make sure your academic units understand the financial benefits of online degree programs and the significant obligations they entail.
- Be sure your IT department is fully engaged with your partner and be prepared to spend time on security-related issues.
- Be prepared to advocate for a new paradigm for distance learning at your institution, one that may threaten your campus's established distance learning powers.

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Lessons Learned

- Recognize that large-scale online programs will impact student service providers across the campus.
- Help your academic units understand that not all degree programs will be able to offered online through your partner; be prepared to walk away from more than you undertake.
- Be able to demonstrate that your online degree programs feature the same educational objectives as their campus-based equivalent and that your online students are learning at a level equal to campus-based students.
- Take it easy, but take it! Working with a partner is the shortest path for traditional higher education to compete with the for-profits.