Universities and businesses alike are "going online." How do you determine whether or not your institution should move to distance education? Large or small, public or private - - what issues should be examined in making this decision? Join us for a session to discuss and share experiences and questions around making the decision to go or not to go into distance education.

Those who attended this roundtable discussion included people who were considering moving into offering distance education programs and those who were already offering online programs. A larger percentage were those who were just getting started and wanted to find some "answers." There was a mix of small private institutions to larger public institutions. Overall, discussions were around different issues that people should be considering when trying to decide whether to start an online program. Discussions started off around the topics of cost-effectiveness, defining distance education and quality of online courses. In trying to define quality, a list of core technologies were offered by one participant - print, voice, video, data, and feedback. It was noted that feedback is key and directly related to quality of an online course. Some example programs offered by another participant were the Educational Technology Program at George Washington University and Cisco online training programs. Discussions around quality of service were discussed - providing the same level of service for on campus students as for online students. It was noted that it is important to include student services such as advising. For faculty support, providing instructional design services for faculty is important along with providing information on other resources such as publisher material. The technical infrastructure for supporting online courses was raised along with the issue of technical support needing to be a "one stop shopping" service. Discussions around funding included how to offer financial aid for online students and dealing with tuition rates. It was pointed out that for some institutions, decisions about tuition and direction of online programs are affected by the mission of the particular institution. In discussing potential markets for an online program, it was suggested that people look into organizations that offer accreditation for professionals or ongoing credits for K-12 teachers. The key is to understand the needs of your constituency to determine what programs to offer that would be unique to your institution’s mission. There was an active discussion about offering undergraduate versus graduate online programs. Some felt that offering undergraduate online programs would take away the "undergraduate experience" - students would be missing out on socialization and building of community that occurs on campus. Some participants were feeling the pressure of moving towards online programs because "this is the way the world is going." The discussion ended with a pointer to
Cost effective?
  Chronicle article - cost analysis (do a search on the Chronicle site for cost analysis)
  Online Learning (another online journal to search)
Definition
  Distinguish supplemental & fully online
Quality?
Example programs
  GSU Ed Tech Program (web-based)
  Cisco online training
Core technologies (driven by instructional objectives)
  Print
  Voice
  Video
  Data
  Feedback**** related to quality
Faculty Support
  Instructional design
Quality of Service
  Same for residential and online
Look for advice from Extended Studies organization
Publisher material
Student Services
  Including advising
Technical Support
  One stop shopping
Technology Infrastructure
Accreditation
  Online versus on campus
Financial Aid for online students
State Legislature requirements
  Out of state/in-state tuition
Potential sources
  Accreditation for Professionals
  Ongoing credits for K-12 teachers
Service mission - land grant
Focus on programs you do well
"Fighting Walmart"
Unique product/unique to mission
Graduate vs undergraduate online?
  Undergrad experience
  Missing socialization
  Missing building community
Feel pressure - this is the way the world is going
Start with hybrid courses?
Is DL just a delivery system?
Reference: "Information Ecologies"

Need to understand your constituency
Lose ability to get emotions/atmosphere across
Offering "some" level of service versus no service