

## Mid-Project Narrative Report

### Agency Overview

The California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation's (CDCR) Office of Correctional Education (OCE) provides educational programs and services to incarcerated individuals in California's prisons. OCE's mission is facilitate the successful reintegration of the individuals in our care back to their communities equipped with the tools to be drug-free, healthy, and employable members of society by providing education, treatment, rehabilitative, and restorative justice programs, all in a safe and humane environment.

OCE offers a wide range of educational programs, including adult basic education, high school diploma, high school equivalency, vocational education, college programs, transitional education, and more. OCE serves over 100,000 incarcerated individuals, 37,000 of whom are enrolled in a formal course of study, at 31 accredited adult schools located in California's prisons. OCE's programs are designed to not only improve academic skills but also to provide vocational training and life skills necessary for successful reentry into society. OCE partners with other CDCR divisions and community organizations to provide a continuum of services to incarcerated individuals from admission to release.

### DLAC Team Members

<p><b>Dr. R. Lynne Ruvalcaba, Ed.D.</b> Administrator, Educational Technology Office of Correctional Education</p>	<p><b>Patrick O'Neill</b> Supervisor of Academic Instruction Office of Correctional Education</p>
<p><b>Erin Case</b> IT Manager I Incarcerated Population &amp; Community Services</p>	<p><b>Bryan Boel</b> Peer Literacy Mentor Program Teacher Valley State Adult School Valley State Prison</p>
<p><b>John Richards</b> Academic Teacher</p>	<p><b>Vera Valdivia-Abdallah</b> GED Teacher</p>

Tsunami Adult School Pelican Bay State Prison	New Horizon Adult School California State Prison, Lancaster
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### **IDEAL 101 and CDCR'S Site Plans**

IDEAL 101 was tailored to individual adult schools, intended to provide participants with the knowledge and skills necessary to develop a site technology plan. CDCR's DLAC, representing the interests of not one site but thirty-one sites with unique needs, found the course challenging as it progressed from generalized information to more specific tasks focused on creating a single site plan. At that point, with OTAN's support, CDCR's DLAC diverged from content in the IDEAL 101 course and created an approach that best served the needs of our system, helping our team create a document that is actionable and appropriate to our schools.

The course focused on key topics such as assessing technological needs, distance learning, creating a technology vision, identifying barriers, and evaluating technology effectiveness. Recognizing the diverse needs of the team, CDCR's DLAC created not one but three individual site plans that were brought together to support a system-wide strategic technology plan outlining goals, objectives, and action steps for achieving our technology vision.

The development and completion of these site plans helped meet the program goals for CDCR's DLAC in several ways. Firstly, their creation provided a framework for other schools to use when identifying and addressing technology needs, aligning them with CDCR's overall technology vision. The plans also included strategies for addressing gaps in resources and evaluating the effectiveness of technology implementation, ensuring that CDCR resources are allocated efficiently, and that progress was tracked.

IDEAL 101, although not specifically applicable to CDCR in all areas, provided an opportunity for DLAC members to build their capacity and expertise in strategic technology planning, promoting digital leadership, and enhancing digital literacy. The skills and knowledge gained through the course will be leveraged by DLAC members to support ongoing technology initiatives and drive innovation within the CDCR.

### **Accomplishments to Date**

- Creation of three school site plans
  - New Horizon Adult School
  - Tsunami Adult School
  - Valley Adult School
- Creation of a draft strategic plan for OCE
- Solicitation for an Educational Technology Advisory Committee

### **Use of Skills Learned at Training Sessions**

#### **Team Building**

CDCR is a vast system and staff at individual schools rarely get the time or opportunity to work together. DLAC's training sessions and the work we have done between those sessions has allowed us to truly collaborate and create a vision for what work in CDCR can look like in the future. By including individuals from OCE, Incarcerated Populations & Community Services, and the individual site level faculty, the team has truly operated in a fashion where leadership is shared, ideas are presented and built upon, and each team member has been positioned to contribute value to the finished product. We have learned to work not only within the constraints of our system but also within the limitations of individual schools and security

levels to arrive at a work product broad enough to meet the needs of the system yet unique enough for each school to adapt it to their processes.

### **Handling Conflict**

Conflict in our team has been minimal and we have been aware of the need to give each member time and grace where necessary. We have rescheduled our regular team meetings to work with the demanding schedules of team members and recognized when those meetings have not been productive. At one point, when the team hit a “wall” with a coach who did not seem to be a good fit for our work, we were cognizant of the need to act fast and work collaboratively with OTAN to arrive at a solution. That work shifted our focus, provided a new coach, and reduced the tension felt by team members whose valuable time was not being honored in our previous format. Since that time, the team has struggled to find a time that works for everyone to meet but there has been only collaboration toward resolving that barrier rather than conflict over whether the meetings are productive at all.

### **Communications Skills**

Effective communication is essential for any team involved in strategic planning, particularly when working remotely. Our team has utilized virtual meetings, the Canvas learning management system, our coach, and our regular check-in meetings to significantly improve our communication skills. Our virtual meetings improved our ability to facilitate communication and help build rapport among team members between times when we are in the same physical space. Our team members are located across the state and virtual meetings have been the most effective means of keeping the work going and allowing each member to contribute to the work.

Regular check-in meetings, while sometimes not as productive as we would like, have improved communication by ensuring that team members can contribute to and remain informed

about the progress of the strategic planning process. These meetings provide an opportunity for team members to ask questions, provide feedback, and identify potential roadblocks as they progressed through their individual site plans.

### **Using and Encouraging Strengths**

Each person on the CDCR DLAC team brings a different background, experience, and area of expertise. We have used this diversity to the benefit of our work, recognizing that the challenge in front of us is not to create a site plan for CDCR but to create flexible site plans that work for our various sites and the needs of our staff and students. We have leveraged the strengths of those who are detail oriented, those who are visionary, those with technical expertise, and those with the capability to message important requests to the executive team to ensure our work remains relevant and on track. Our team does not have one leader-it has six individuals who step up to leadership and relinquish the responsibility as the work and time demand. We learned that this work requires the development of new strengths and recognize the time to use those appropriately.

### **Challenges, Barriers, and Setbacks Encountered**

The challenges, barriers, and setbacks we have encountered have largely related to fitting a “round peg in a square hole.” As we recognized the unique nature of CDCR in the context of DLAC, we have adjusted both our approach and our work product to overcome and continue toward our goals.

### **Changes Made**

We changed our approach from one site plan to three with an overarching strategic plan. We also changed our coach to an individual more appropriate to our needs.

### **Planned “Next Steps”**

We will continue building on our strategic plan, meeting with key OCE staff, and creating a long-term vision for technology in CDCR. We will also pilot Northstar to enhance digital literacy and add eTextbooks to our digital offerings on a wide scale.

### **Additional Support Needed**

OTAN has provided superior support and been responsive to our every need; no additional needs have been identified at this time.

### **Help Needed from DLAC Staff**

OTAN has provided superior support and been responsive to our every need; no additional needs have been identified at this time.

## **Summary**

CDCR's experience in DLAC has been rewarding and productive. Our team has come together effectively despite logistical barriers and has learned to communicate well, utilize strengths effectively, and overcome roadblocks that could have impeded our work. Specific change needed to make the work applicable to our environment was embraced by OTAN and the DLAC members. We are well positioned to continue our work with our new coach and a focus on providing an actionable work product to the Office of Correctional Education. Our strategic plan is well underway, we have three site plans, and our team is excited to continue the work.