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Interview: Alan Davis, Associate Dean, Jefferson State Community College

Posted By [Marcy Lane](#) On September 14, 2007 @ 2:36 am In [Medical](#), [Associate](#), [Certificate](#), [School Reviews](#) | [3 Comments](#)



Alan Davis, Distance Education Associate Dean for [1] [Jefferson State Community College](#) joins us today to discuss distance education.

Tell us about the distance learning programs offered at Jefferson State Community College.

The mission of the Distance Education Department at Jefferson State Community College is to provide accessibility to education through a broad range of quality courses in various disciplines. JSCC offers many online courses for transfer credit (university parallel degree programs). The college also has three accredited career education programs that are available through distance education: Veterinary Technology, Physical Therapist Assistant, and Funeral Service Education. JSCC also offers several online courses toward many other AAS degrees and certificates.

What is the typical duration of each of your programs?

Associate degrees are typically thought of as two-year degrees; however, students may complete most programs at their own pace on either a full-time or part-time basis.

What would you say makes Jefferson State Community College programs different and better than other comparable online programs?

JSCC has provided countless opportunities for the greater Birmingham area for over 40 years. The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools fully accredited the College on December 14, 1968. JSCC has a history of offering distance education courses: we began offering telecourses in 1978, began using interactive video and offered our first online courses in 1997, and are now using podcasts in distance education as well. Faculty who teach these classes typically are the same faculty who teach traditional versions of the same courses and often hold on-campus office hours. Tuition is also very affordable. Finally, we participate in a statewide articulation agreement, which ensures transfer of credits for all Alabama General Studies Committee approved courses between public institutions of higher learning.

How important would you say accreditation is when choosing an online college?

Extremely important! Accreditation ensures a certain level of quality in the educational process. In addition, accredited institutions will often only accept courses for transfer if completed at regionally accredited institutions, and whether one has graduated from an accredited institution may have a bearing on how the degree is viewed. For example, when we hire, graduate work must generally be from a regionally accredited institution for us to consider the applicant.

There is some debate as to whether or not online degrees are as worthwhile as traditional degrees. What steps does Jefferson State Community College take to ensure that online students are receiving the same education that they'd receive in a classroom?

Distance education courses are taught by qualified Jefferson State instructors. Upon successful completion of these courses, students receive credit equivalent to traditional on-campus courses. JSCC has established course competencies for each course we offer. We have also developed standards for teaching online and a peer course evaluation process to ensure the same integrity and rigor in our online courses as students receive in traditional classes.

What would you say are some of the benefits of earning a degree online rather than in a traditional classroom?

JSCC strives to provide flexible learning opportunities to meet the needs of students who have difficulty accessing the campus for a variety of reasons including childcare, transportation, physical disabilities, work responsibilities, etc. People are able to complete courses regardless of their work and family schedules. Many of our distance education students would not be able to attend college without the option of online courses.

If a student enrolled in one of your programs was interested in finding an internship in their field in their area, do you have any means of assisting them in acquiring an internship position?

Program coordinators assist students with finding internships. Students who do not already have a job in their field are often placed at the college in appropriate departments. In the past, companies have called wanting an intern, and students have been placed with them.

Does Jefferson State Community College offer any job placement services to your students and graduates?

Yes. The Career and Job Resource Center at JSCC offers a variety of services not only to students, but to community residents and businesses.

Is financial aid available to students in your programs?

Yes, financial aid is available for students who qualify through the federal guidelines. There are also a variety of scholarship opportunities for students.

Do you have any advice for students enrolling in online classes for the first time?

Check the accreditation status of any institution you are considering. Keep in mind that online classes are not "easier" than on-campus classes. They require as much work and self-discipline, and perhaps more self-motivation. Be sure you have the requisite computer skills. Typically, these include navigating the Web, uploading and downloading attachments, and word processing skills such as copying, pasting, and editing text.

What do you enjoy most about your position in the Jefferson State Community College?

I believe in Distance Education. We have been able to provide educational opportunities for Katrina victims, military personnel serving in Iraq, recent transplant recipients and people waiting for organ transplants, students with various physical disabilities, workers whose schedules vary from week to week, and busy parents. This is a rewarding job for these reasons.

To Request more information about the distance learning programs available through **Jefferson State Community College**, [2] [Go here to visit them online.](#)

Thank you Alan, for sharing and participating in this piece for [3] [Online Degrees 2.0](#)

That concludes our interview!

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