

WICHE ICE ...

from a Faculty Member's Perspective

Mary Dallas Allen liked the idea of WICHE ICE long before she knew it existed. As a social worker in Anchorage, Alaska, she was supporting four Head Start programs in the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta. The only source of higher education for her colleagues in these remote locations was via teleconference. She thought there had to be a better way.

Later, when she was working on her Ph.D. at Portland State University, she taught a “distance” course: every two weeks she boarded a plane to travel to southern Oregon, where she taught a face-to-face class. Again, she thought there had to be a better way.

Now she is a faculty member in social work at the University of Alaska Anchorage (UAA) and teaches fully online courses to remote UAA students and others from ICE member institutions. She loves teaching and being able to reach out to her students with all the tools available to teach online. It is the better way!

Through ICE, Allen enjoys having students from other institutions enrolled in her classes. But even better has been her opportunity to work with colleague Carolyn Haney at the University of Wyoming (UWYO) to jointly develop a three-credit master’s-level elective course that they take turns teaching in alternate years. “There is not enough student demand to teach this course every year at both institutions, but we can make it work every year if we combine our enrollments,” she says. “Together, we planned the content of the syllabus, so the course would meet the needs of both programs. Each of us has our own way of teaching and preferred activities, and we have the freedom to pursue them. If I am teaching the course this year, I create the syllabus in the UAA format. When Carolyn teaches, she uses the UWYO format. We share our materials and teaching strategies. In addition, annually we each teach online a one-credit companion course, whose content is state-specific. It has been a very rewarding experience.

“Since our partnered course is cross-listed in both campus schedules, students can register for it at their home institution and use their financial aid, and it will appear on their home transcript. No transfer hassles. They know in advance that the course will count for their program, and they don’t have to wait a year to take it on our campus.

“Has it been more work for me? No, the workload is really the same. All students participate in the class equally and I post the final grades for all to the UAA system. The grades are then transferred through ICE to the exchange student’s home institution.

“From an advising perspective, WICHE ICE is a great asset too. We can offer our students more online courses than our small program can offer, especially since not all faculty members teach online. We have selected partners’ courses because they meet our quality standards and supplement our program in areas of special interest.”

