

Roadmap to Effective Distance Education Instructional Design

Factors Affecting Success in Distance Education

- **Educational background:** The more formal education the student has had the more likely the student is to complete the course.
- **Increased commitment to learning:** Students have a vested interest in the course content. Usually they are not as caught up in the "social" activities surrounding the college experience (such as football games, clubs, parties) as young students.
- **Attitude and motivation:** Most distance learners are in the course because they chose to be there.
- **Experience with distance courses:** After successfully completing one distance course, students were willing to take additional courses.
- **Cognitive abilities:** Distance education students who express higher cognitive abilities perform better.
- **Learning styles:** Some research suggests that more **field independent** individuals do well in distance education environments than **field dependent** individuals.
- **Extracurricular concerns:** Sometimes external factors (job, family obligations, etc.) influence whether a student will be successful or not. Having family support is frequently critical in a student being able to devote time and energies to a distance course.

All of these indicators point to the importance of doing **audience analysis**. Some ways this can be accomplished are by:

- Analyzing the general abilities of the class.
- Analyzing the potential for learner interactivity.
- Understanding the learner characteristics in your class.

Roadmap to Effective Distance Education Instructional Design is a collaborative effort of the following universities: University of Florida, University of Idaho, Iowa State University, University of Missouri-St. Louis, Texas A&M University, and Texas Tech University. This project was funded through a **United States Department of Agriculture Higher Education Challenge Grant** (2002-2004).