

ANALYSIS OF CLEARWATER CHRISTIAN COLLEGE  
IN PREPARATION FOR A TRANSITION TO DISTANCE EDUCATION

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## INTRODUCTION

This paper is the first of several documents written for a course on Change Management at Florida State University. The following pages include an analysis of an organization being studied as it undergoes a major change to its integral structure and procedures. The organization analyzed is Clearwater Christian College (CCC). The major change being implemented is the development of an official distance learning program for the purposes of offering a masters degree in education along with other degrees at a later date. As of May 2008, CCC will have implemented its first online degree program.

For the sake of familiarity, the mission of CCC is posted here from its website. (CCC's vision is not readily available from its site or its student catalog):

*Clearwater Christian College exists to provide an excellent liberal arts education centered on God's Word, with a focus on challenging students to love God wholly, to know Him intimately, and to serve Him fervently; educating men and women to minister faithfully and humbly with evangelistic zeal as they impact eternity for Jesus Christ in every avenue of life.<sup>1</sup>*

The following pages will present a systemic analysis of select portions of the college with a view to using the detailed findings in the construction of a change management plan for the upcoming venture into distance education. The following analysis will look at Clearwater Christian College from several angles including: functions of key systems likely to be affected by the upcoming change, structures likely to be affected, processes affected by the upcoming change, the performance environment in which the future change will occur, and the characteristics of the workforce that will participate in the change. Two final sections will briefly touch on the change to be implemented and the ideal state of the college as a result thereof.

## SYSTEMATIC ANALYSIS OF CHANGE ENVIRONMENT

The tools used in analyzing the college are not the author's own, but those discussed in the aforementioned course. The college, as an entire system, will be examined by means of the SAAPs model (Systematic Approach to Performance Analysis). The SAAPs model (Figure 3 below. ) guides the thinker in identifying key structures within an organization, processes of the organization, services produced by it, and the environments in which all of this occurs. The model also aids in thinking about workforce performance and any feedback that returns to the system following the production of goods or services.

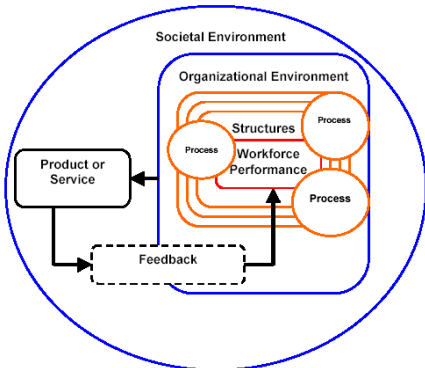


Figure 1. SAAPs Model

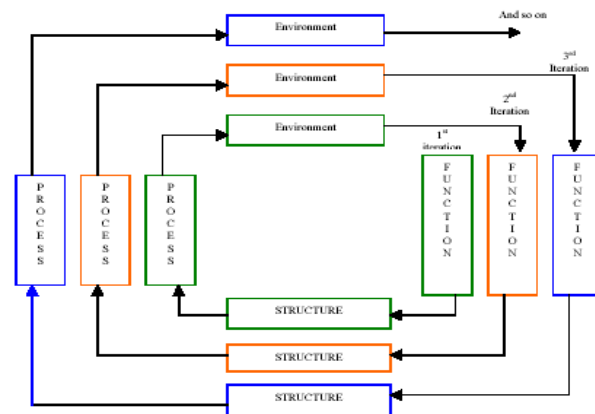


Figure 2. Gharajedaghi Iterative Analysis

<sup>1</sup> Accessed on February 14, 2008, from: <http://www.clearwater.edu/aboutus/mission.asp>

Once the above factors have been identified, Gharajedaghi's *Iterative Analysis* (Figure 2; above) will be used to think about the relationships between them. What functions does this organization (CCC) fulfill? What structures within it carry out those functions? What processes are executed to achieve the functions? What environments do the structures rest within and the processing occur within?

To gain an accurate understanding of the main processes affected by the distance education change, one or more process maps will be charted out. Finally, Thomas Gilberts Behavioral Engineering Model (BEM) will be used to describe the performance environment impacted by the change.

## **Systemic Overview of Clearwater Christian College**

As a college, CCC is a true system made up of several sub units or "structures" that work to produce the overall product/service offered by the college; namely a four year undergraduate education to Christian students. The various structures within the college system include all the academic divisions, the library system, the physical plant, the administrative system, the IT department, and all other standard structures intrinsic to the operation a college. (See Figure 3 in the Appendix for a general idea of the structures that make up the college).

As is often the case, sub-systems of the system under consideration are made up of smaller sub-systems themselves. In a college environment, each office or department has smaller structures operating within it. For the purpose of this analysis, as will be shown later, one structure within the college that will be seriously impacted by the distance education change is the academic sub-system of the college. This essential core structure is made up of six sub-structures in the form of subject area divisions/departments. (See Figure 4 in the Appendix). These will later be examined in the "Structures" section below as they contain still more sub-structures (i.e. staff hierarchies) within themselves. It will be at the staff level where the change from distance education will be most visible.

## **System Functions**

As was briefly mentioned above, the primary function of Clearwater Christian College is to offer a four year accredited college education within a Christian environment. While all of the sub-systems mentioned above (i.e. registrar, library, IT, etc...) are involved in producing this overall product, it is the academic divisions and departments that lie at the heart of the production.

In more concrete terms, this overall function of producing a "four year education", is in reality the mass development and teaching of face to face classes by many faculty members simultaneously. Therefore, in a literal sense, the primary system function of the CCC is to create, teach, and facilitate, multiple face to face classes each semester.

As the reader might suspect, it is this portion of the college that will be most affected by a transition to distance education, and thus our focus will be exclusively on the academic sub-system. Other lesser system functions, such as providing student housing, or helping students pick their courses, will not be examined for sake of space.

## **Structures**

For the purposes of this analysis, it is important to drill down and look at the structures within the college that will be most affected by the upcoming transition into distance education. Due to the fact that distance education involves changing the way courses are designed and taught<sup>2</sup>, the structure(s) that deal

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<sup>2</sup> Distance education involves re-creating courses so that they are available and effective in online format (i.e. digital documents, web pages, forums, audio files, etc...). Delivery equally involves changing the way the faculty teach. Rather than traditional teaching in a face to face environment, teaching in distance education involves facilitating student use of online documents, chats, posting forums, and emails.

with the course design and delivery are where this analysis will focus. In Figure 3 (Appendix), this area is indicated by the dark blue “academic divisions/departments” structure.

The academic “structure” within the college is subdivided into six subject area divisions/departments (sub-structures) such as Humanities, Sciences, Fine Arts, and so on. Each division can be further thought of in terms of still smaller structures of faculty members in each department. Faculty carry out the overall system function as they plan courses in their individual offices, and teach students within various classrooms of the college.

Unlike some organizations where structures can be complicated (the product being produced must pass through many offices, decision points, or hands before reaching its final form), the structure at the college department staff level is relatively simple. There exists a basic two tier structure common to all of the six academic departments. Each is comprised of a department chair as well as the professors he or she oversees.

In each division, or department, the chair oversees operations within his or her respective department. Individual faculty members of those departments, carry out the daily design and teaching of all courses offered by their departments.

Faculty and chairs come together in meetings from time to time to make collective decisions regarding coordinating classes for a semester, creating or retiring courses, and discussing departmental events. Apart from this, much of the function of the college is achieved by faculty working predominantly alone when designing or teaching courses rather than interacting regularly in some planned process. All of these “individuals” designing and teaching courses, simultaneously make up the primary product of the college; an environment in which a student can take four years worth of college classes.

As will be shown in the processes section below, the primary output of the college does not come to life as it moves from hand to hand, department to department, structure to structure. Product value and worth is not the result of accumulated knowledge, craftsmanship, or decisions contributed by the interaction of a variety of players. Instead, each individual professor contributes almost the entirety of a course's value by virtue of his or her own intellectual expertise. The final product is essentially the conglomerate result of many individual professors teaching courses they created on their own.

## Processes

The high level process that occurs in the production and delivery of courses at CCC is in fact a three part process. First, faculty committees bring a course into existence and chart out an official syllabus. Second individual professors take the official course syllabus and develop a course (lectures, readings, activities, etc...) on their own. Thirdly, the professor teaches the course, as an individual, from semester to semester. Throughout the life of the course, evaluations, observations, and other forms of feedback are used by the professor to repeatedly revise and retool the course. Eventually, if a course ceases to be demanded or of interest to students, a committee of faculty will retire the course and remove it from the catalog. (See Figure 5 below.)

The more specific process involved in producing courses throughout the college (simultaneously by many faculty) is more akin to a craftsman's shop, rather than an assembly line. Individual craftsmen (faculty) simultaneously craft isolated products (courses) from start to finish for customers (students). This complicates the possibility of developing a “process map” because each professor may employ a unique technique in course design and course delivery. Thus it must be pointed out that *there is no official standardized CCC process* for designing courses (or delivering courses). This is the direct opposite of an assembly line environment where a company has a very specific process that exists to be mapped out. All a processes map can hope to do in this case is to illustrate certain iterative activities that should be common to all faculty using effective practices in the process of course design.<sup>3</sup> To this end a modified

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<sup>3</sup> This issue was discussed with one CCC department chair. It became evident that although faculty recognize effective practices for course design, there is no list of behaviors that any faculty member can list out that would represent what all faculty do when developing courses.

version of an ideal course development process (Dick & Carey, 2005) must be used to represent what multiple faculty are doing when they develop their courses. It should be noted that some go through more of these steps, while others go through less during course design. The same professor may even use all the steps when creating one lesson and only some when creating another. There is no normative process one could easily identify and map out. (See Figure 6. Green indicates minor points of revision).

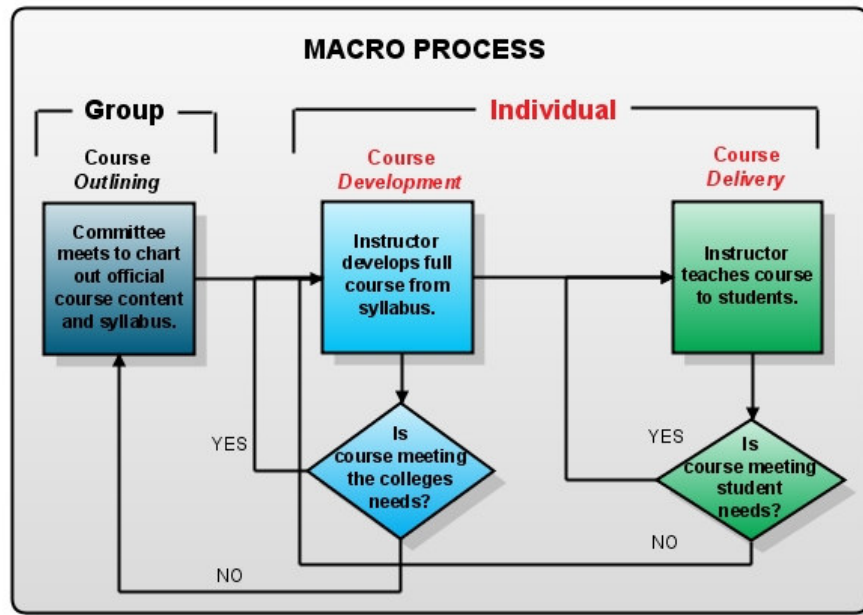


Figure 5. The macro view of course design & delivery process.

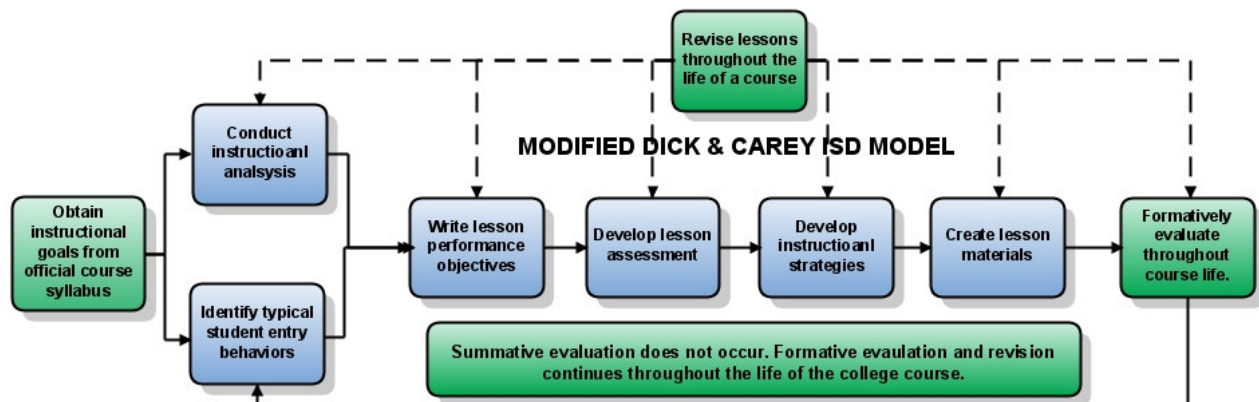


Figure 6. Adjusted Dick and Carey model to represent a mapped process of course design.

The above model only represents half of the process (course development) which transpires during the production of CCC's main output. A second independent process map is needed to illustrate course delivery. As with course design, Figure 5 indicates that course delivery is also an individual process carried out in a craftsman like scenario and therefore will differ from professor to professor. *Here again, there is no official process for course delivery at CCC.* There is no way to poll all CCC instructors for a survey of their typical course delivery procedures, nor was a department chair comfortable trying to summarize it in conversation with the author. Furthermore, delivery procedures differ depending on

lesson content and objectives. No two lessons are delivered alike. All that can be hoped for is a model that illustrates common “best practices” that occur in CCC classrooms as faculty teach their courses each day. Furthermore, this process is complicated by the fact that course delivery can be viewed from a semester long perspective or from a “today’s lesson” perspective. Both matter, especially when the issue of distance education comes into view.

As with the course development above, some sort of process map “representing” ideal lesson delivery has been substituted for the absence of an identifiable or standardized (even unofficially standardized) CCC process. This process map represents the delivery of face to face lessons during a single class setting, not an entire semester setting.

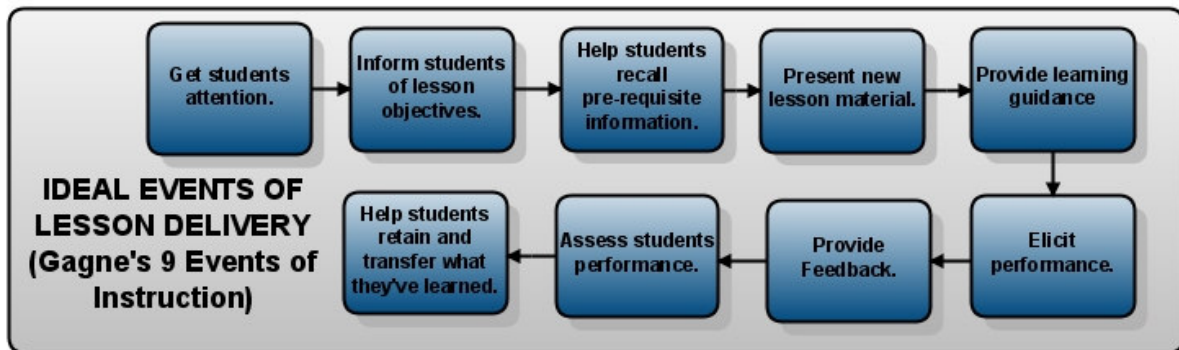


Figure 7. Gagne’s Nine Events of Instruction serves as a representation of what many well delivered course would appear like if blended together and mapped out.

Unlike some organizations, there is no straightforward process in regards to carrying out the systems overall function. The artistic craftsman aspect of course delivery introduces too much variability for one to be able to map out a course delivery process unique to CCC.

### Performance Environment

No analysis is complete without some reflection on the environment in which the above course development and delivery processes occur within. The environment for course development is a combination of non-physical factors such as the availability of information on how to execute one’s job properly, availability of resources to actually do so, and any motivational rewards or punishments that exist. When the environment for course delivery is under analysis the factors that affect delivery processes are a bit more physical (class size, student characteristics, technology resources) and social (typical student behaviors, student attitudes, and classroom culture). Due to the scope of this paper, only the general environmental factors are mentioned below, not the physical or social factors affecting course delivery.

In regards to information on how to conduct course development and delivery, the following should be noted. New CCC faculty are not given a printed job description or job manual when they are hired. To date all such information is given verbally, although guidelines and procedures are being put into writing. New faculty are not expected to bring extensive teaching and course design knowledge with them. Training and guidance are provided. Certain courses are made available to interested professors as examples of “best practices”. Additionally, there does not exist an office or staff person solely responsible for assisting faculty with course design and instructional skill building. Instructors do receive feedback from course evaluations, student body language, student comments, and suggestions from more experienced faculty.

Resources needed by professors during course design and teaching are available for the most part. All faculty have access to a personal office, the internet, and the college library. Each department is able

to cover the cost of faculty training from time to time. Yearly budgets do take into consideration the technology and equipment needs of faculty although the college does not have the budget of a large research university. Faculty members are also allotted necessary time to plan for development<sup>4</sup> of face to face courses.

Incentive wise, there is less available in the CCC work environment. All faculty do receive a regular income for their work. Beyond this, the college does not provide any bonuses or incentive pay; only incremental raises based on years of experience. There is no tenure available at the college, and all faculty sign a yearly contract. Non-monetary incentives would include personal satisfaction, the power that comes with being an expert, and recognition received for any accomplishments. Negative incentives are not a day to day part of the CCC teaching environment. If a faculty member is a consistently low performer, they will not be offered a contract of employment the following year.

### **Workforce Characteristics**

CCC has a workforce that spans the spectrum, from blue collar maintenance staff, to highly experienced faculty with PhD's. The staff under consideration in this analysis paper are the professors that comprise the teaching segment of the college. For the most part, this is a rather homogenous group.

Most professors have PhD's or advanced degrees in their field and are highly intelligent. Most also have several years of experience designing and teaching face to face courses at the college level. Earning a PhD and getting into a faculty position at any college demands a substantial amount of motivation and drive; these employees have plenty. The position also brings with it excellent writing and speaking skills.

Conversely, the amount of work poured into landing a college faculty position breeds a natural resistance to any changes that threaten the security and stability of the traditional teaching environment. Furthermore, because they are used to having a high amount of autonomy in course design and classroom activities, it is reasonable to expect that they may strongly resist any changes by the college that would threaten this autonomy.

While a small hierarchy does exist within departments, the first among equals nature of department faculty, means that all professors with a few years under their belt know they have some pull. They are at the top of the educational pyramid and they know they have "expert" status. This can make for politically charged work relationships, albeit the Christian climate of CCC will mitigate this some

The technical and computer skills of the faculty vary greatly depending on age and area of expertise. All faculty have the capacity to surf the web, use email, word processing software, and Power Point to some extent. Many have no experience teaching online, and most have no experience developing courses specifically for online learning. The same is true in regards to experience using a CMS, LMS, or working with the more advanced technologies necessary to transfer face to face content into digital content. Having said this, a few of the faculty have experimented with online learning and online course design. A few others have begun to get their feet wet by implementing aspects of online learning into their courses. Finally, it should be noted that the colleges has not used a CMS in the past.

### **Description of the Change to be Introduced**

As was mentioned at the beginning of this analysis, CCC will be implementing its first distance learning degree in May of 2008. This is a major change as it significantly alters the way all online professors prepare courses and teach them. In short, faculty will go from teaching in front of a class of students to teaching through a computer screen and an LMS. Students will now be at a distance and somewhat invisible.

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<sup>4</sup> Online course development time requirements will not be adjusted into instructors regular schedules. As a result, faculty will be paid a stipend for any online courses they teach because doing so will require they find other time for online course development.

The distance learning courses will be taught via the Blackboard LMS. Online course creation, will be added on top of the current list of faculty duties rather than replacing certain duties. There will be little change to the college in terms of computer hardware and IT staff duties due to the fact that Blackboard is hosting CCC's online classes on its computers. Blackboard is also being paid to take care of the IT work and technical support.

For those faculty teaching online courses, the change will require the ability to create course content for an online learning environment rather than a face to face environment. Faculty will need to learn to teach (facilitate) their specific subject area online, not just teach online in general. Many will need to develop philosophies of learning that contain more than a behaviorist, teacher centered core. Instructor-student communication will be restricted to chat rooms, posting forums, and email. Faculty will need to discover ways to effectively communicate what was once taught face to face in an equally effective manner with students spread across multiple time zones. Furthermore, they will need to discover how to do this in their spare time.

### **Desired Consequences and Organizational State**

The ultimate goal of the online program is to attract students from around the nation to earn their degree with CCC. Stated another way, CCC hopes to maintain its attractiveness to the modern college student, now that students have come to expect online learning as a educational option. Furthermore, the college hopes to grow its student body in size now that relocation to Clearwater will not be required for a portion of the body.

The college hopes to see as many faculty as possible using distance education although not all will teach online. All teachers will incorporate some form of Blackboard into their face to face courses. On the flip side, CCC hopes that the transition to distance learning will not result in a disruption or decline in the quality of traditional faculty and student activities on campus.

The college hopes to see its faculty thrive online, and not simply survive. They hope to see faculty creating online courses that utilize cutting edge technology and best practices for distance learning. The end result should be a situation in which the unique four year experience available only to students physically attending CCC, will soon be available to every city in America.

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## APPENDIX

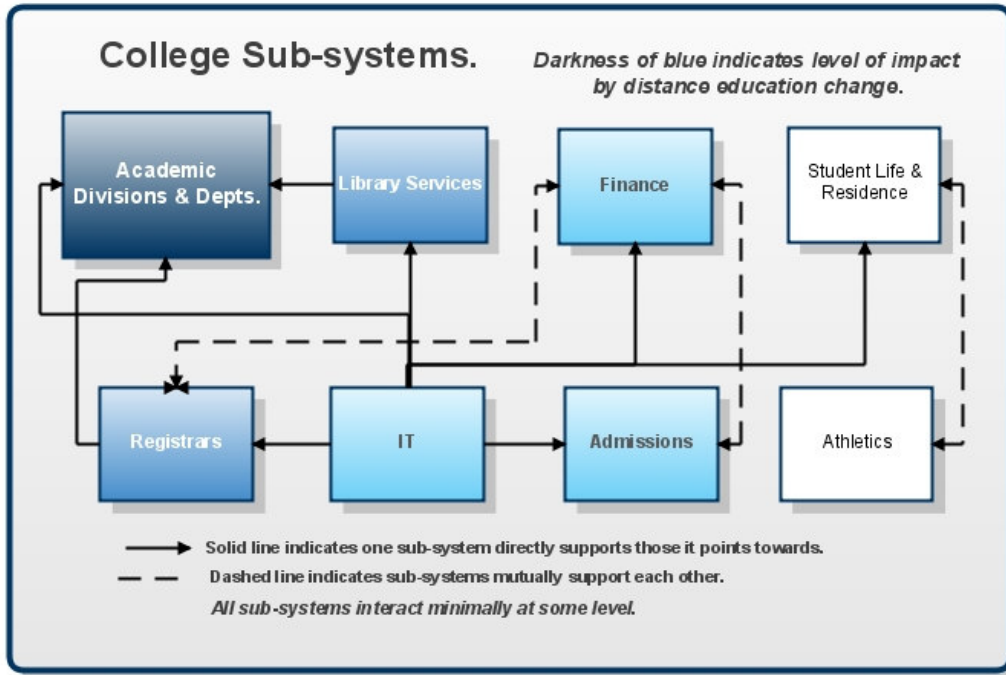


Figure 3

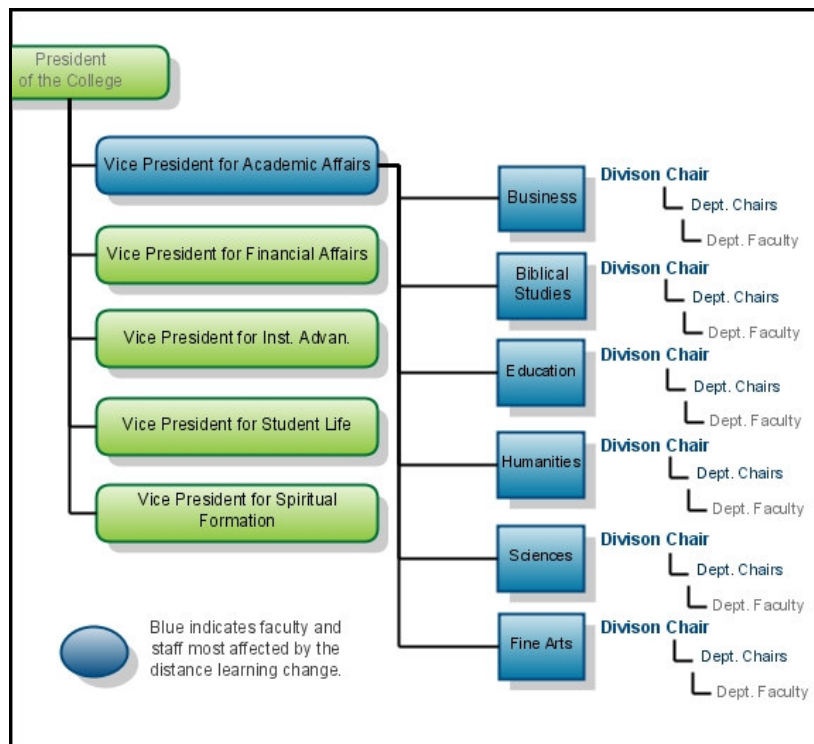


Figure 4