

Some SERVICES FOR ONLINE GRADUATE STUDENTS Appalachian State University

Library

- **University-wide:** http://www.library.appstate.edu/services/distance_education
 - RAP (Research Advisory Program) sessions with librarian through web conferencing
 - Web delivery of journal articles and other subscription materials
 - Physical sources/materials (books, videos, DVDs, maps, etc) are mailed to distance education graduate students free with postage-paid return label
- **Graduate programs delivered through online immersive environment**
 - 3 programs (to date): Library Science, Instructional Technology, School Administration
 - Online immersive environment is a “campus” (see description of AET Zone which is now *OpenQwaq*) with a library in which the distance education librarians maintain office hours, provide virtual tours of collections, work with students to identify appropriate research sources, and schedule online conference work groups.
 - AET Zone/OpenQwaq
<http://www.lesn.appstate.edu/aetz/description.htm>



Student services

- **University-wide:**
 - Distance education office serves as portal to all campus services
 - *SmarThinking*, a virtual 24/7 tutoring and academic assistance help desk
 - Distance Education Student Advisory Committee provides ideas for support and services
 - The University’s technology support services are available to distance education students.
 - Access through the University’s Virtual Desktop Infrastructure (more commonly known as *uDesk*) to a Windows 7 operating system, as well as the majority of the software titles that are available in computer labs on the main campus.

- ***Graduate programs delivered through online immersive environment***
 - 3 programs: Library Science, Instructional Technology, School Administration
 - Online “campus” has a student services building which “houses” the library, alumni center, faculty offices, distance education office
 - Student services building also has course schedules, IT assistance, etc
 - The [all graduate] department in which all of these programs are housed has a Student Services Director who provides not only technical support but many other types of help with student requests.

Mentoring and advising

- ***University-wide:***
 - Two graduate program managers in the distance education office serve as liaisons with graduate students until the students are established in advising/mentoring relationships with graduate program directors in the departments
- ***Graduate programs delivered through online immersive environment***
 - 3 programs (see above)
 - Online “campus” has the *So-What Saloon* in which students and faculty (and avatars) convene to chat, discuss topics of interest or concern, solve problems, etc. From the virtual campus: *“When you enter the Saloon, click on a table, turn on your microphone, and enter the audio chat room that appears. Share your perspectives with peers and colleagues”*
 - Note from a faculty member in Instructional Technology: *“Faculty members within OpenQwaq are identified by first names only, so that they may be easily accessible to students in all program areas. We have explicit assignments which match new students with ‘veterans’, and many informal opportunities for conversation and learning from/with one another.”*
 - The virtual world has entities beyond the virtual Appalachian campus. Also in the world is the Keever Middle School, a fictitious school with real problems and a cast of characters for role-playing in school leadership.

Major lessons learned

- Significant mentoring is possible in an online environment
- Immersive online environments provide robust platforms for collaboration and teamwork that mimic real-world experiences
- The connections made in face-to-face graduate programs can be replicated in the right kind of online environment.

*For more information, including direct contact with some of the major players on campus:
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