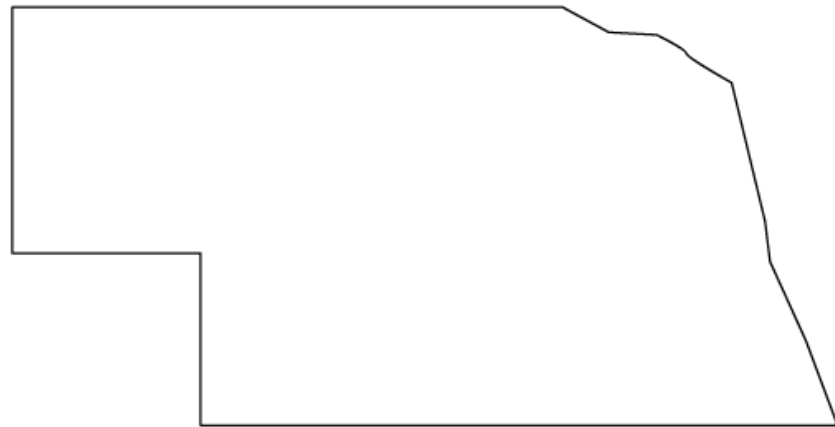


August
2009

A Report by the
Coordinating Commission
for Postsecondary
Education



***Delivering Courses Beyond
Campus Walls***

**Off-campus and Distance Education in Nebraska
2007 - 2008**

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2007-2008**

I.	Summary	Pg. 2
II.	Delivery Methods	
	A. Summary of Delivery Methods and Number of Courses, 2007-2008 (Table I)	Pg. 6
	B. Delivery Mode by Sector (Figure 1)	Pg. 7
	C. Change in Number of Courses Offered by Delivery Method, 1997-98 to 2007-08 (Graph I)	Pg. 8
III.	Enrollment	
	A. Change in Distance Education Enrollments, 1998-99 to 2007-08 (Graph II)	Pg. 9
	B. Estimate of the Number of Students Served by Distance Learning (Table II)	Pg. 10
IV.	Degrees by Distance Delivery	
	A. Degrees Available at Distance (Table III)	Pg. 11
	B. Change in Number of Degrees Available at Distance (Graph III)	Pg. 12

Delivering Courses Beyond the Campus Walls

Highlights of the Report

2007-08

What is distance delivery?

- Traditional delivery—instructor and students are in the same time and place away from the campus; for example, a face-to-face class in a different town or a location in the community other than the campus.
- Synchronous delivery—instructor and students are in the same time, but not the same place; for example, two-way interactive video, where the instructor is in one location, often on the campus with students in a classroom, and delivers the course at the same time by video to other students at a “receiving” site or sites.
- Asynchronous delivery—instructor and students are in a different time and place; for example, a course on CD-ROM or an Internet-based course where students work on their own and have no specified time for contact with the instructor.

Which Nebraska institutions offer courses at distance?

- All six community colleges, the three state colleges, and the University of Nebraska campuses offer courses at distance (Table I). The data reflect all courses offered at a location other than a main campus or a branch campus.
- Overall the number of courses increased by 26% from 2006-07. This large increase, however, followed a year of little change, when the number of courses increased by just .8% between 2005-06 and 2006-07. All three sectors reported increases in 2007-08, although some institutions experienced declines.
 - The university increased their offerings by 18%; while the number of courses was down at UNK and UNL, UNMC and UNO increased the number of courses by 33% and 26%, respectively.
 - The state colleges increased their offerings by 2%, with small increases at each institution.
 - The number of distance courses at the community colleges increased by 35%, following a decline the previous year. The large increase was fueled by a 286% increase at Central Community College. All other colleges experienced increases as well, with the exception of Western Nebraska Community College, where 538 fewer courses were offered—a decline of 62%.
 - The decline at WNCC took place solely in traditionally-delivered courses. In 2006-07 WNCC reported very large numbers of courses in business and information technology in Sidney, apparently for Cabela’s employees. There were almost none of these courses reported in 2007-08.

- The number of courses offered by traditional delivery at Metropolitan Community College appears high because the college has three education centers that are not considered branch campuses but enroll large numbers of students.
- Some institutions that reported fewer courses than in the previous year reported larger class sizes, partially offsetting the reduced number of sections available.
- Some increases in course offerings are due to one credit workshops and other training opportunities that may be a response to a slowing economy and the resulting demand for fast retraining by unemployed workers.

What is the most popular method of delivery?

- When the Commission first collected this information in the early 1990s, traditional delivery was the primary method of reaching students who could not be present on campus. Synchronous delivery consisted of a few two-way interactive video courses and asynchronous delivery was mainly pre-recorded audio and video courses.
- Today asynchronous delivery is the most popular delivery mechanism in all three sectors, while synchronous is the least-used (Figure 1).
- The popularity of asynchronous courses is illustrated in Graph I. Asynchronous delivery surpassed synchronous delivery in 2000-01 and traditional delivery in 2004-05. The number continues to climb dramatically, with a 46% increase between 2006-07 and 2007-08.
- In 2006-07 the number of both synchronous and traditional delivery courses declined significantly, 19% and 5% respectively. The figure for synchronous courses rebounded in 2007-08 with a 48% increase; traditional delivery continued its decline by 5%.
- Some of the increase in asynchronous delivery and decline in traditional delivery might be attributed to institutional enrollment policies. Traditionally-delivered courses often have a minimum enrollment of 8 or 10 students to ensure that the majority of instructional costs are covered by tuition. If this number isn't reached, the class is cancelled. Asynchronous courses may have a much lower threshold, or even no threshold, resulting in fewer cancellations and, therefore, a higher number of course offerings.

What courses are offered at distance?

- Almost every type of course is offered at distance, including courses requiring hands-on activities such as biology, nursing, and mechanics.
- Most community colleges report liberal arts and sciences courses, including those for academic transfer programs, together in a single category.
- Large numbers of courses were also offered in business, education, health professions, and computer and information sciences.

How many students are served by distance technology?

- In 1998-99, the first year the Commission collected enrollment data, there were 7,512 students (duplicated headcount) enrolled in courses offered either synchronously or asynchronously. Over three times that many were served at distance by traditional delivery (Graph II).
- By 2005-06 the numbers had shifted dramatically as the delivery methods shifted—a trend that continues in 2007-08. Since 2000, the number of students enrolled in asynchronous courses increased from just over 4,400 in 1998 to 83,070 (duplicated headcount) in 2007.
- The total number of students served by some form of distance education was 127,084 (duplicated headcount) in 2007-08 (Table II). This is a 7.5% increase over 2006-07 and mirrors the increases and decreases in the number of courses at the university, state colleges, and most of the community colleges. The exceptions are Northeast and Southeast Community Colleges, where more courses were offered in 2007-08 but fewer students were enrolled.

Are degrees or other awards available entirely by distance technology?

- In 2006-07 Nebraska public institutions offered a minimum of 75 degrees, endorsements, and certificates completely by distance technology (one institution did not report this data). This is almost double the number offered the previous year and more than 5 times the number offered in 1998-99 (Graph III).
- Graph III shows an increase from 2006-07 to 2007-08 of only 3 awards offered entirely at distance. However, two institutions did not report this data. Within the 12 institutions that did report, there was an increase of 14 awards available entirely at distance. In 2007-08 four other programs were available completely by traditional delivery and 32 by a combination of traditional and distance technology. The latter reflects a decrease from the previous year, but this number is also influenced by the lack of reports from two institutions.
- The awards available range from certificates at the community college to master's degrees at the university and state colleges.

Where are the distance courses offered?

- Most asynchronous courses are available anywhere a student has access to a computer, including his or her home or work place.
- Synchronous and traditionally-delivered courses were once offered in the majority of Nebraska counties, but this number has declined as the popularity of asynchronous courses has increased.
- Most synchronous courses require a location capable of receiving a live transmission from the campus. Many high schools and public buildings have this capability. Some institutions utilize this capability to offer college courses to high school students. Data for high school courses was reported to the Commission, but was not compiled this year. High school data will appear periodically in future reports.

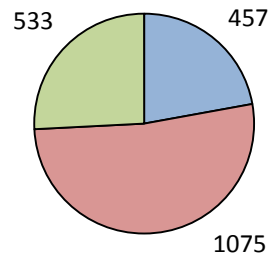
TABLE I
Summary of Delivery Methods and Number of Courses
2007-2008

Institution/Sector	# Synchronous courses	# Asynchronous courses	# Traditional courses	Total # Off Campus
UNK	76	354	7	437
UNL	0	404	5	409
UNMC	373	77	4	454
UNO	8	223	517	748
NCTA	0	17	0	17
University Total	457	1,075	533	2,065
CSC	88	439	54	581
PSC	0	377	141	518
WSC	15	224	135	374
State College Total	103	1,040	330	1,473
CCC	132	1,727	252	2,111
MCC	50	1,140	1,488	2,678
MPCC	67	144	83	294
NECC	143	240	285	668
SCC	16	772	79	867
WNCC	81	153	97	331
Community College Total	489	4,176	2,284	6,949
Grand Totals	1,049	6,291	3,147	10,487

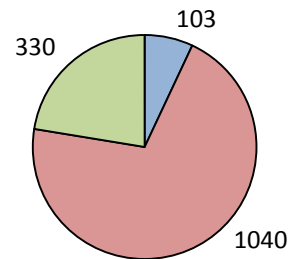
MCC's Traditional total includes 836 courses offered at Sarpy Center and Fremont Center.

FIGURE I
Delivery Modes by Sector
 Number of Courses, 2007-2008

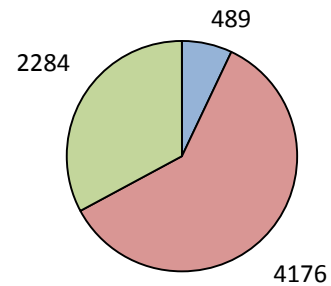
University



State Colleges



Community Colleges

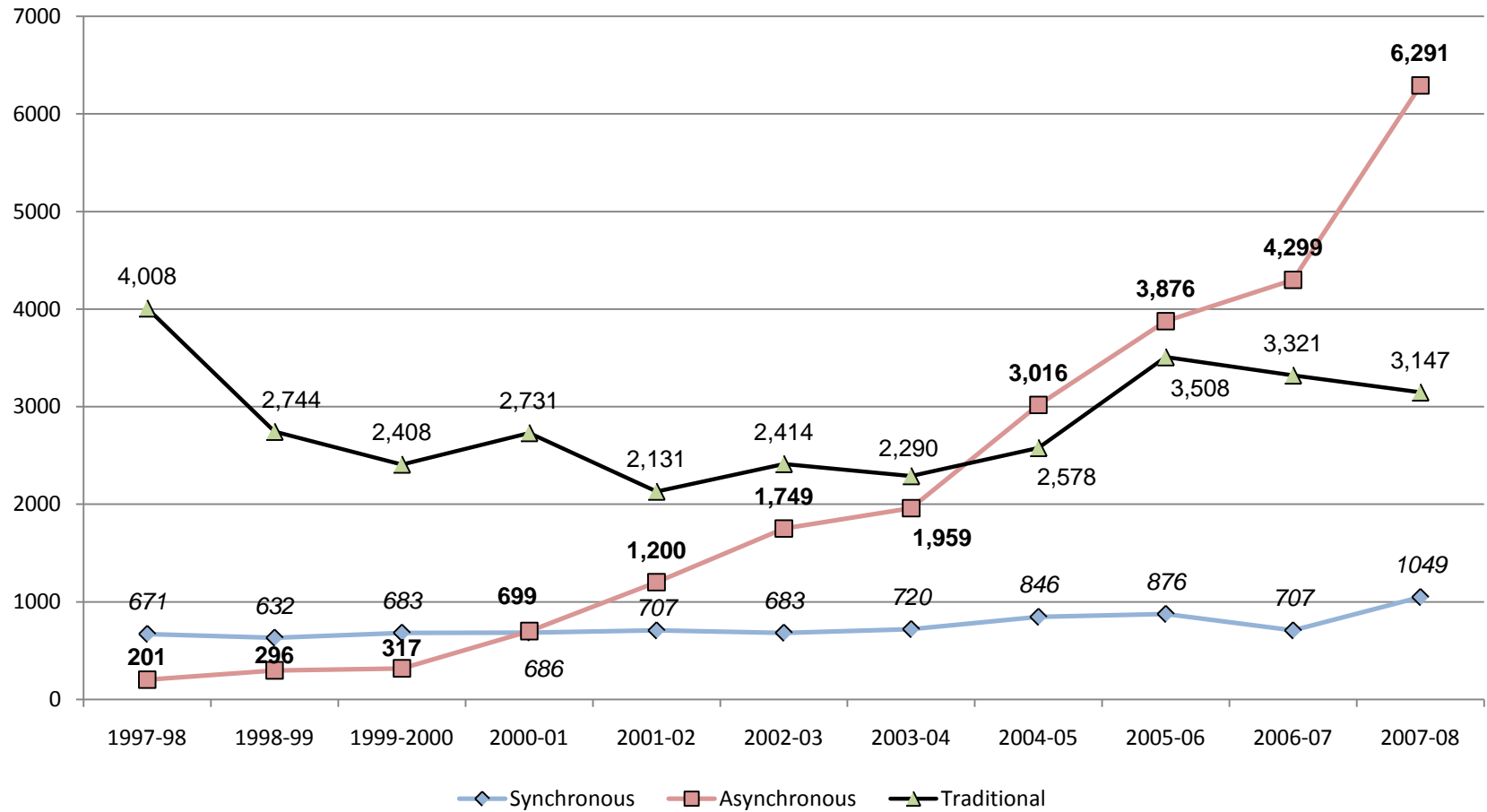


Mode of Delivery

- Traditional: Instructor and students are in the same time and same place
- Synchronous: Instructor and students are in the same time but separated geographically
- Asynchronous: Instructor and students are not in the same time or the same place

GRAPH I

Changes in Distance Education Courses Offered by Nebraska Public Institutions 1997-2008



GRAPH II

Changes in Distance Education Enrollments in Nebraska 1998-2008

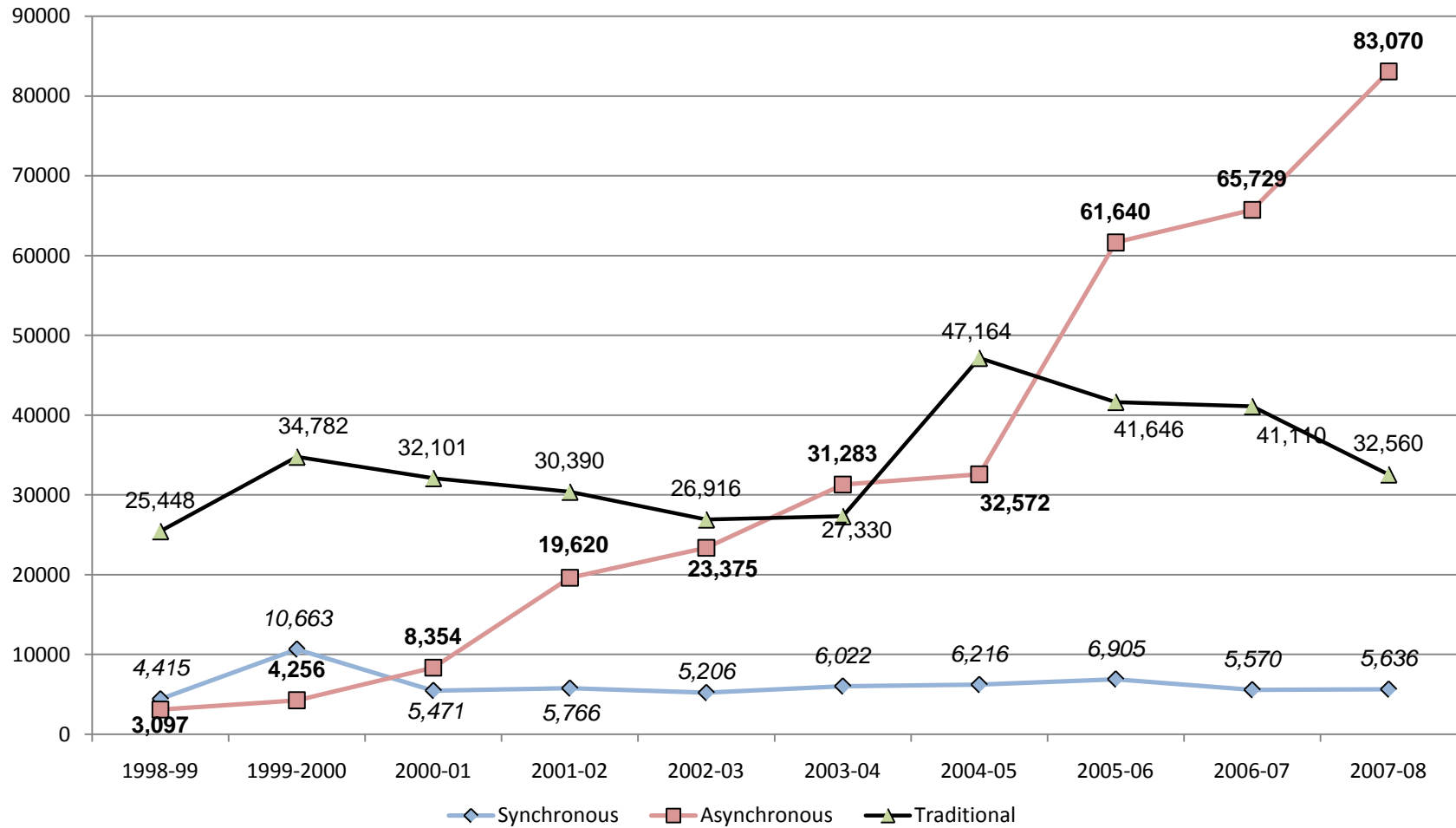


TABLE II
Estimate of the Number of Nebraska Students Served by Distance Learning
(duplicated headcount)
2007-2008

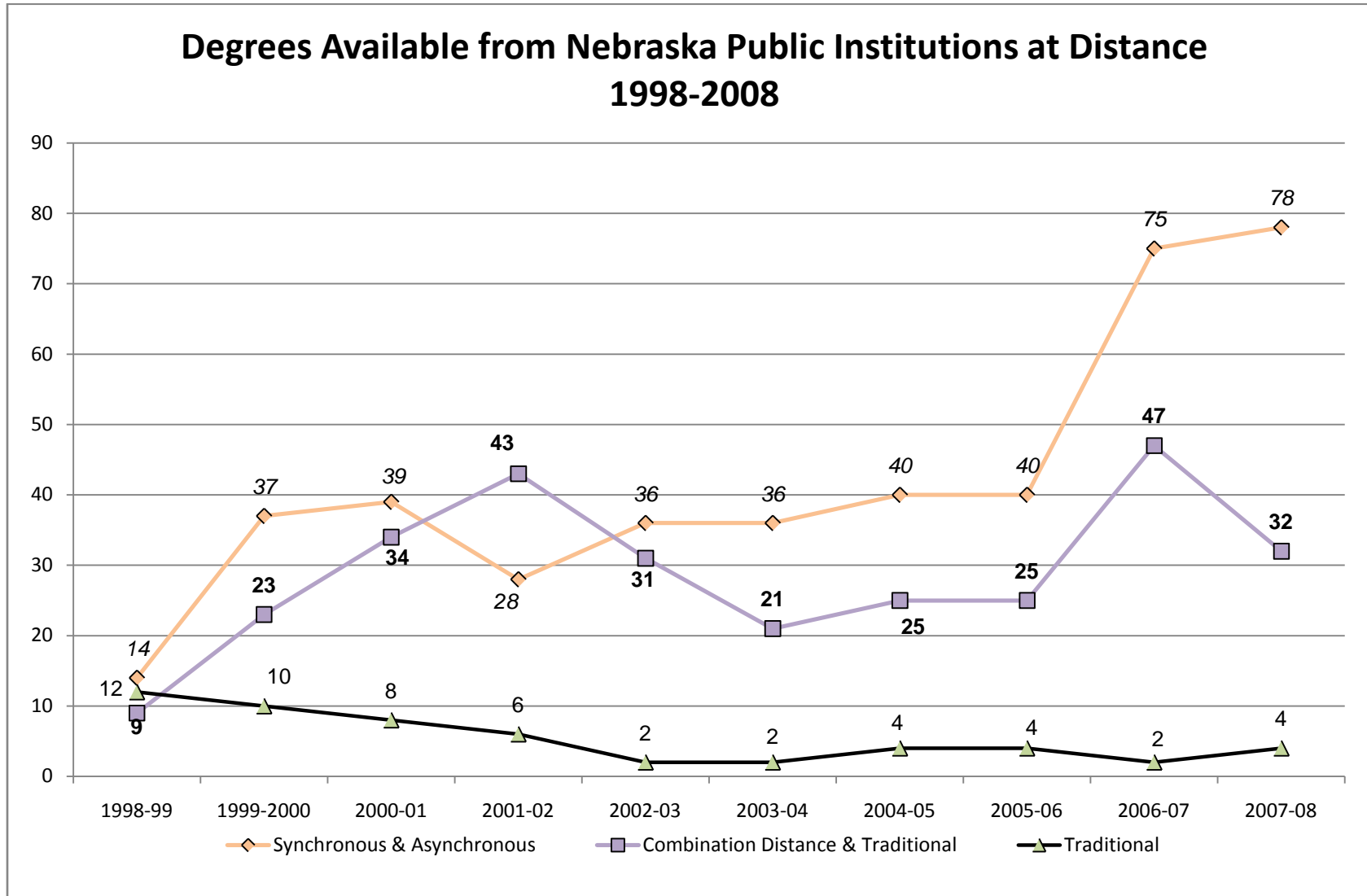
Institution/Sector	Synchronous		Asynchronous	Sub-Total	Traditional	Grand Total
	Sending	Receiving				
UNK	228	126	5,666	6,020	87	6,107
UNL	0	0	5,493	5,493	24	5,517
UNMC	1,363	1,135	1,208	3,706	24	3,730
UNO	0	27	4,310	4,337	4,358	8,695
NCTA	0	0	96	96	0	96
University Total	1,591	1,288	16,773	19,652	4,493	24,145
CSC	0	595	6,035	6,630	376	7,006
PSC	0	0	8,893	8,893	1,741	10,634
WSC	66	85	3,141	3,292	2,627	5,919
State College Total	66	680	18,069	18,815	4,744	23,559
CCC	1,079	1,249	9,661	11,989	2,580	14,569
MCC	369	321	20,132	20,822	14,807	35,629
MPCC	917	692	2,255	3,864	711	4,575
NECC	1,129	742	3,168	5,039	3,286	8,325
SCC	0	219	10,962	11,181	1,016	12,197
WNCC	667	445	2,050	3,162	923	4,085
Community College Total	4,161	3,668	48,228	56,057	23,323	79,380
Grand Totals	5,818	5,636	83,070	94,524	32,560	127,084

TABLE III
Degrees Available at Distance

Institution	2006-07			2007-08		
	Entirely by Distance	Traditional	Combination of Distance & Traditional	Entirely by Distance	Traditional	Combination of Distance & Traditional
UNK	13	0	4	16	0	4
UNL	7	0	6	10	0	4
UNMC	2	0	2	1	0	3
UNO	0	0	3	0	0	3
NCTA	0	0	0	0	0	0
University Totals	22	0	15	27	0	14
CSC	12	0	4	12	0	3
PSC	6	0	3	6	1	5
WSC	2	1	1	2	1	1
State College Totals	20	1	8	20	2	9
CCC	11	1	20	NR	NR	NR
MCC	12	0	0	21	0	0
MPCC	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR
NECC	2	0	0	2	2	4
SCC	8	0	0	8	0	0
WNCC	0	0	4	0	0	5
Community College Totals	33	1	24	31	2	9
Grand Totals	75	2	47	78	4	32

NR - No Report

GRAPH III



Some institutions did not report this data. The number of institutions not reporting varies from year to year.