

# E-LEARNING PILOT

(JUNE 30 – NOVEMBER 30, 2007)

at

THE UNIVERSITY OF ALASKA

Submitted by:

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## Executive Summary

To meet the learning needs requested by various employee groups, an online library was piloted between August 30 and November 30, 2007.

Active employees had access 24 hours a day, seven (7) days a week to thousands of online learning and development material via the internet and any desktop computer. The available courses covered business and management skills, desktop (MS Office—Word, Excel, etc.) and information technology, environmental, health and safety, transportation, and workplace compliance (Family and Medical Leave Act, Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act, etc). In addition to online courses, employees could access job aids, simulations, books and preparatory exams for certification.

The purpose of the pilot was to determine whether or not the course content satisfied employee learning needs and if the “e-learning” delivery method worked well for University employees. The results indicated that of those who utilized the online material, that the purpose was achieved and received, in general, relatively well.

Within the University system, 486 employees established their account and accessed 1,402 courses, job aids and other online resources. Although hundreds of courses were accessed, employees completed 122 courses, mostly desktop and information technology related. In addition, 180 employees used Books 24x7 with the number of users relatively even across the IT, OfficeEssentials (also known as Desktop) and Business related libraries.

There were at least two formal methods to request and gather employee feedback:

1. Course Evaluations completed by employees who utilized the online material and had direct knowledge of the online material and delivery.
2. An electronic survey to all University employees, many of whom had not utilized the e-learning material at all.

Course evaluations indicated that employees were satisfied that the content met their learning needs and they planned to apply the knowledge and/or skills back to the job. Most of the users indicated that they were satisfied with the delivery method, would use the media again and would recommend it to coworkers.

Additional feedback was gathered about the online material through an electronic survey sent to all active University employees email accounts. Of the 276 survey responses, most had not used the online program because they did not know it was available. For those who did use the online material, the top two challenges were making the time to use it and not being able to log in to the program using their UA username and password. A high percentage (86-97%) of respondents indicated that they would use the resources in the future if it were available.

Overall, based upon the content, user interest, and general acceptability and technical compatibility, offering the online courses (not Books 24x7) for an additional year at a cost of \$xxxxxx is recommended. The online material may be used to supplement traditional learning methods or as a stand-alone resource accessible on demand and as needed.

## Pilot Summary and Recommendation

To meet the learning needs requested by various groups such as staff governance, College of Rural Community Development and Statewide Human Resource management (based upon the redesign efforts in Fairbanks), an online library was proposed and piloted between August 30 and November 30, 2007. While all major administrative and academic units currently provide learning and development for employees, there continues to be an expressed interest in additional professional and career development options.

During the pilot, access to online courses, books, job aids and simulations was provided to all active University employees. The access was provided to employees through the Statewide HR website and the University's MyUA portal. Employees logged in by using their University of Alaska username (or identification number) and UA password.

### Pilot Program Scope and Background

Active employees had access 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to thousands of online learning and development material via the internet and any desktop computer. The available courses covered topics such as business and management skills, desktop (MS Office—Word, Excel, etc.) and information technology, environmental, health and safety, transportation, and workplace compliance (FMLA, HIPAA, etc). In addition to courses, employees could access job aids, simulations, books and preparatory exams for certification.

The purpose of the pilot was to determine whether the course content satisfied employee learning needs and if the “e-learning” delivery method worked well for University employees. More specific goals included identifying

1. learner satisfaction with content
2. learner satisfaction with usability
3. the transfer of knowledge and/or skills back to the job
4. the effectiveness of the instruction
5. learner affinity for using the online options

There were at least two formal methods to request and gather employee feedback. One method was through course evaluations completed by employees who utilized the online material. The second way was through completion of an electronic survey sent to all University employees, many of whom had had not used the material at all. It was hoped that this group would provide additional information about their experiences and expectations or their challenges and knowledge regarding the e-learning program.

### Pilot Results

#### **Resource Usage**

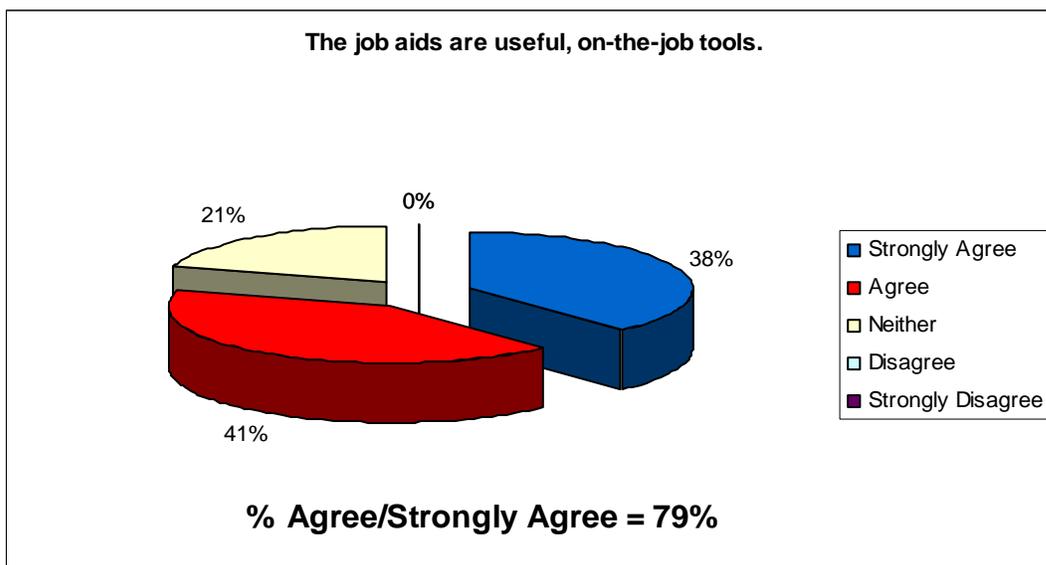
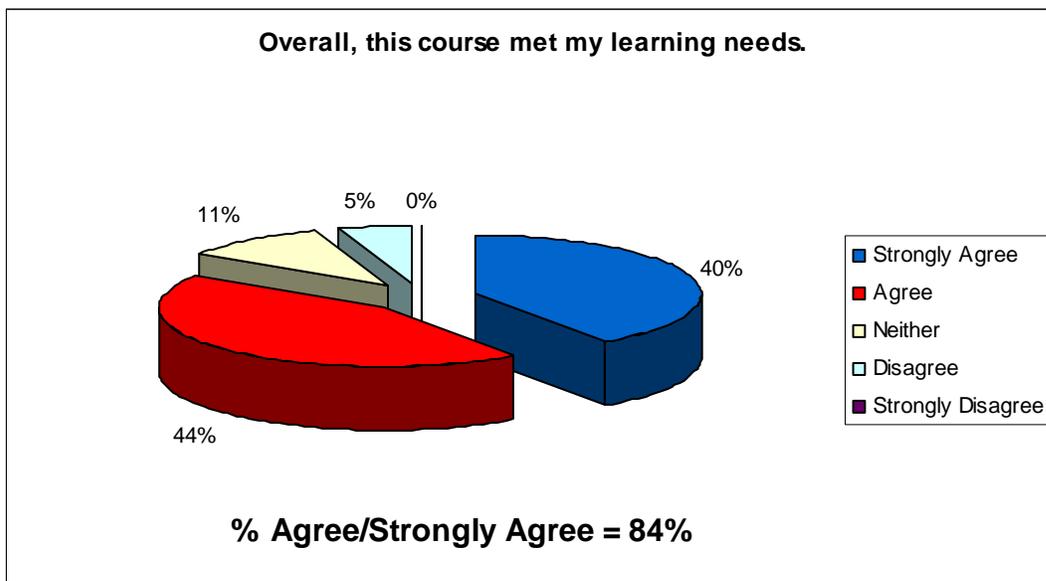
- 486 employees from the University system established their account by logging in during the pilot
- 1,402 various resources were accessed
- 532 courses accessed
- 122 courses were completed
- 180 employees used Books 24x7

- 247 unique books accessed
- Books 24x7 highest number of users were in the IT Pro Library (129 seats), OfficeEssentials or Desktop (121 seats) and Business Pro (116 seats)

### Course Evaluation

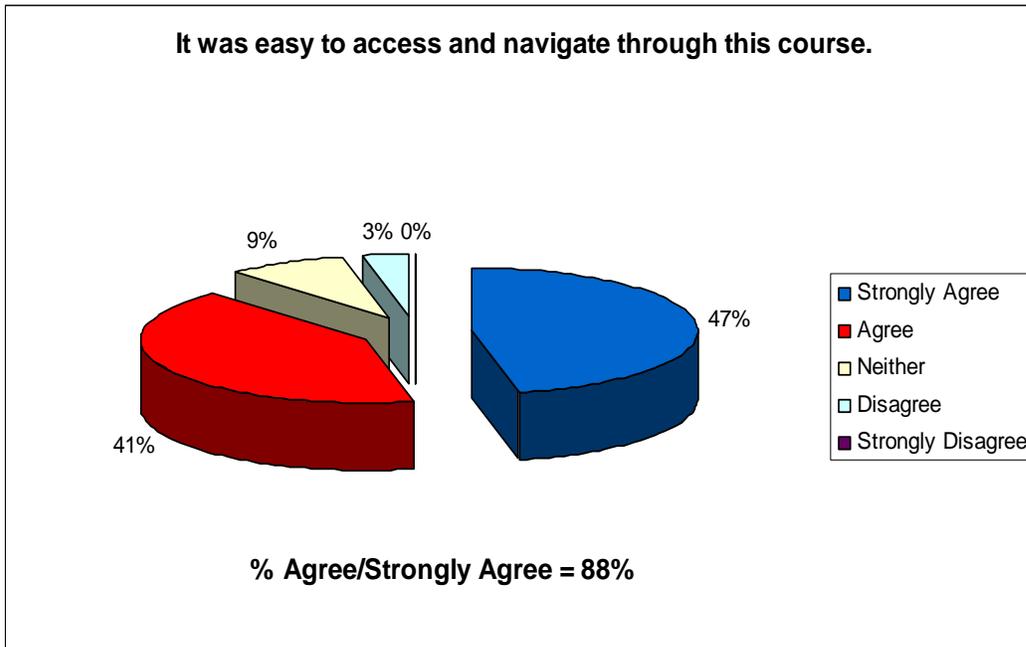
The online course evaluation form was initially made available through the online program although it was also made available through links on the SWHR website. At the start of the pilot, users were encouraged to submit an evaluation after course completion. However, due to a lower completion rate of courses during the early implementation of the pilot, employees were subsequently encouraged to provide comments and submit the evaluation regardless of course completion. Forty-three course evaluations were received.

#### 1. Learner satisfaction with content



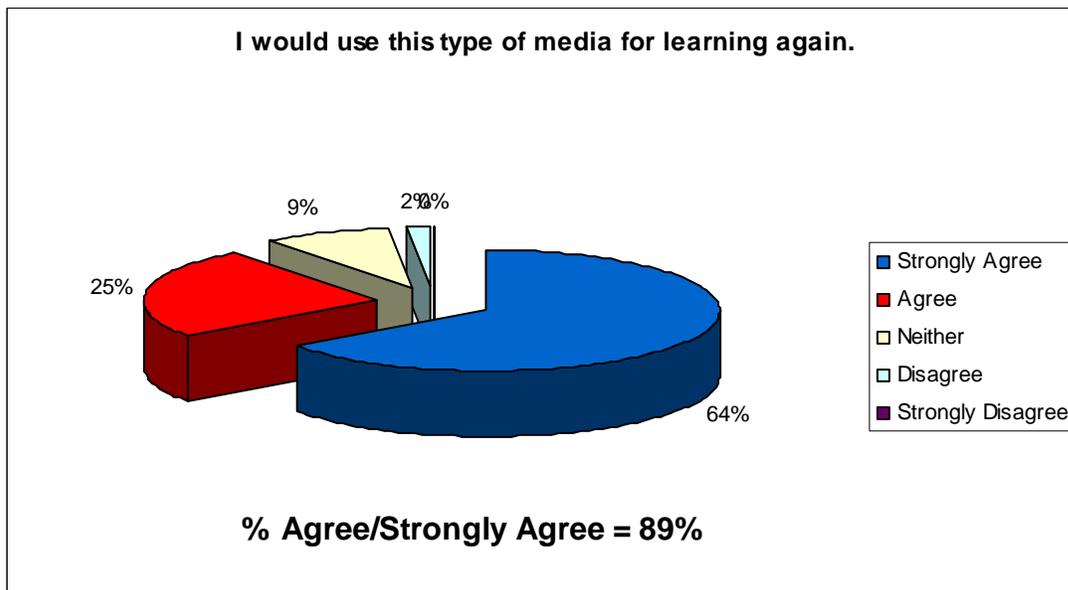
2. learner satisfaction with usability

- o 85% of learners found it easy to access and navigate through the course



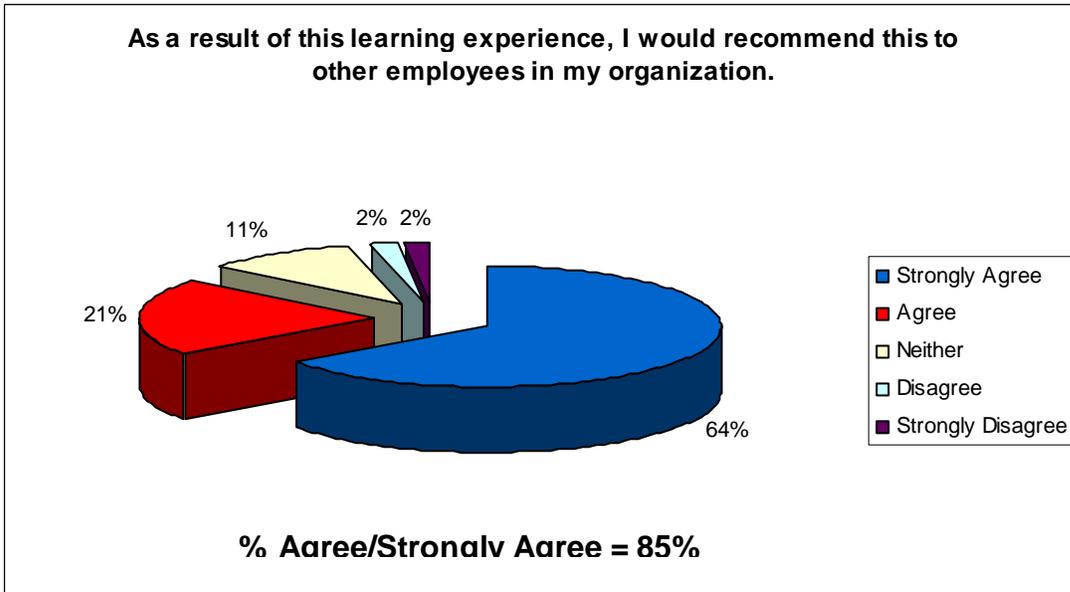
3. Affinity for using the online options

- o 89% of learners would use this media for learning again



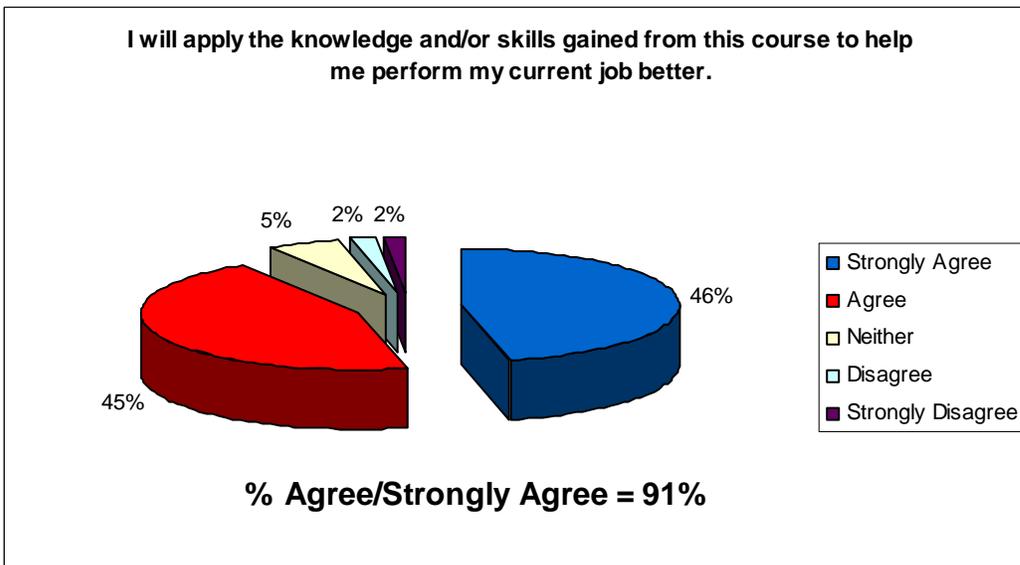
Cont. 3. Affinity for using the online options

- o 85% would recommend the e-learning to other employees in their organization



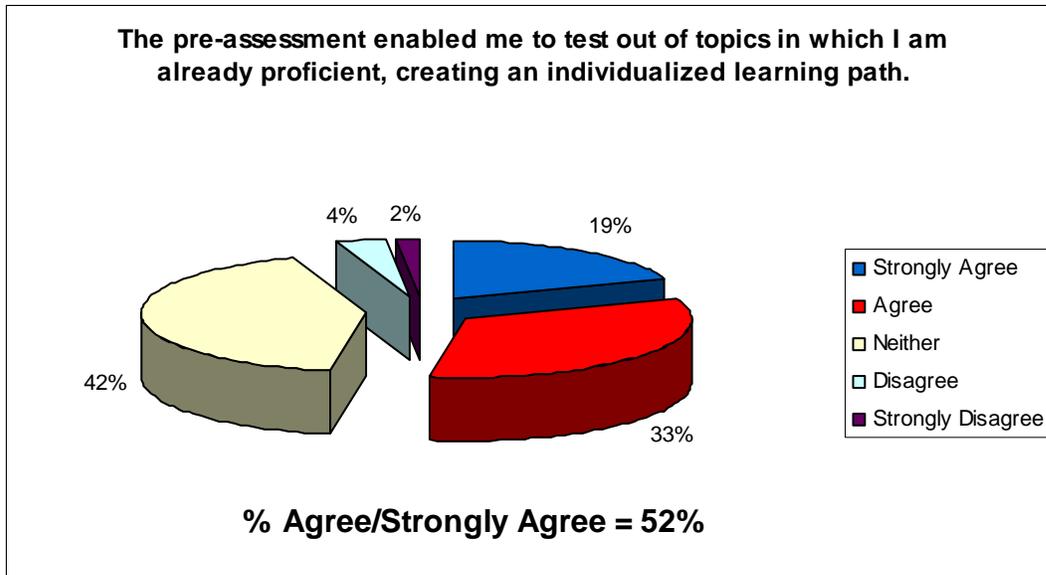
4. the transfer of knowledge and/or skill back to the job

- o 91% of learners would apply the knowledge and/or skills gained from the course to help them perform their current job better.



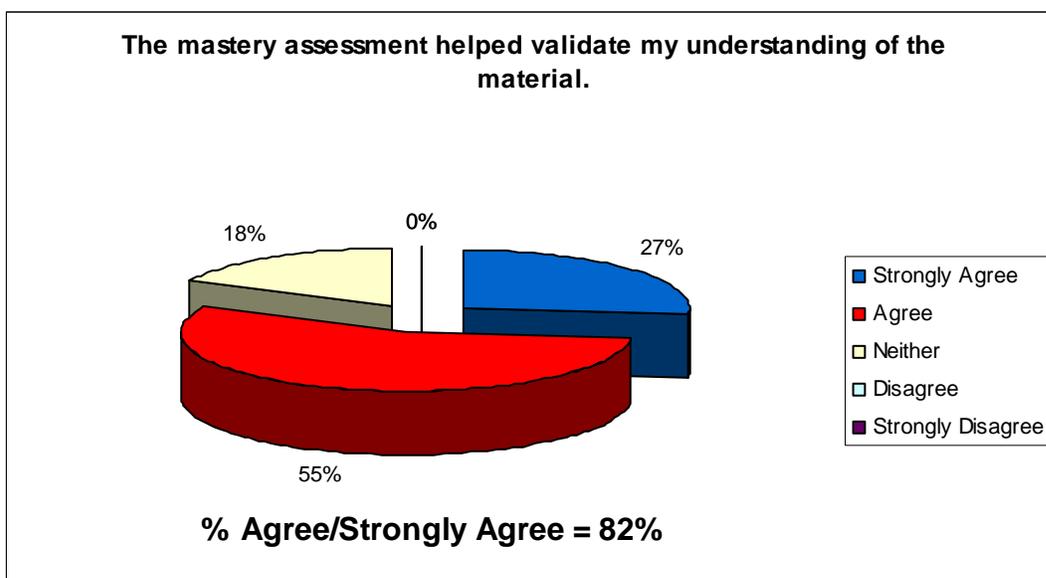
5. the effectiveness of the instruction

- 52% of learners thought the pre-assessment (pre-test) enabled them to test out of topics in which they were already proficient

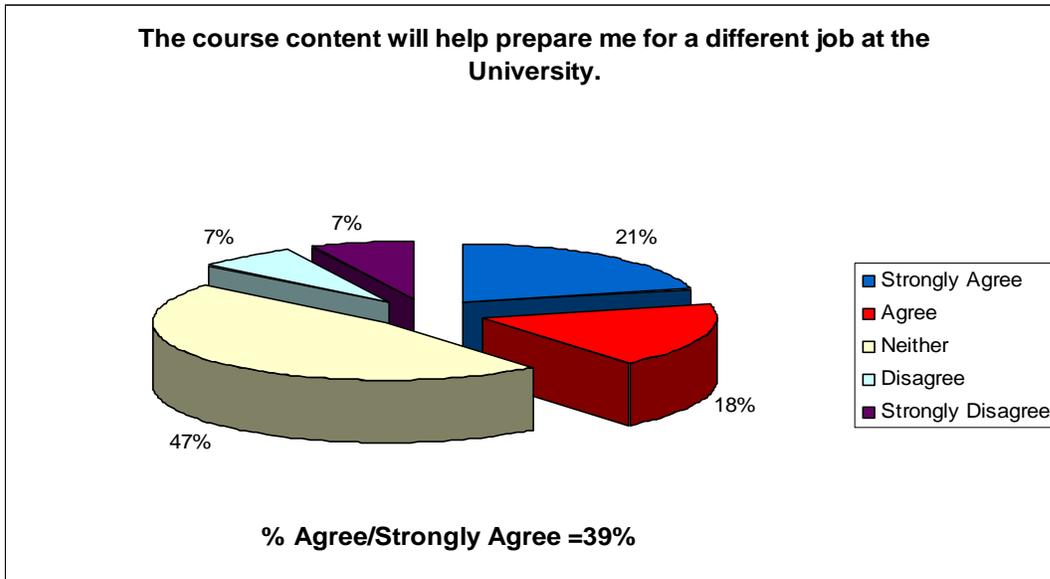


This lower percentage is consistent with feedback from learners that they were not aware they could take a pretest and skip portions of the course. Additional marketing and communication would be needed if the University continued with SkillSoft's e-learning materials.

- 82% of learners thought the mastery assessment (post-test) helped to validate their understanding of the material.



Employees were also asked about whether or not the course content would help prepare them for a different job at the University. Only 39% agreed or strongly agreed with this statement.



The affirmative response rate (39%) to this question was the lowest of any question on the course evaluation. Although one could speculate on the reasons, this may be an area of further analysis if the University were to continue with SkillSoft's e-learning material.

### **Employee Survey**

To obtain additional feedback from University employees many of whom have not used the online learning material, an electronic survey was sent system-wide to all active University employees' email accounts. The survey was open November 7 through November 16, 2007 during which 267 employees responded.

Most respondents did not login to the SkillSoft program indicating that they were not aware it was available or were too busy to login.

For those who were aware of the resource and attempted to use it, the top challenges or barriers were:

1. Making the time to use the e-learning resources (70%)
2. Not being able to log in using the UA username and password (31%)

Regarding the issue of not being able to log in, IT management anticipated potential technical problems on the University's side as opposed to SkillSoft's technical compatibility. Because of that possibility, IT management suggested that the MAU local helpdesks be the initial point of contact for University employees rather than using the vendor's 24x7 technical support. This decision proved to be beneficial for various reasons. It allowed for the internal identification and the resolution of technical issues associated with this e-learning option. It also helped to project the future impact and technical feasibility of employee e-learning for learning and development.

Of interest although most respondents indicated that they never used SkillSoft during the pilot, 86% to 97 % indicated they would use the online resources in the future.

The Statewide Office of Risk Services indicated an interest in the online Environmental, Health and Safety material to assist in providing consistent baseline information system wide. They encouraged the participation by all MAU EHS and Risk Services offices. The overall feedback was supportive in using the online material. They stated a preference to customize the courses, which is possible through a vendor module; however, even without the customization tool, Risk Services indicated that the foundational material was still beneficial in delivering EHS material.

### Conclusion and Recommendations

Based upon the content, user interest and general acceptability and technical compatibility, I recommend we enter into a contract with SkillSoft for 12 months to access online courses and resources at a cost of \$xxxxx. For access to xxxx active employees, this equates to approximately \$7 per employee per year. For the employees who have already registered online, the cost equates to \$111 per employee per year.

This proposal and recommendation does not include contracting on Books 24x7 at this time. Although various users have reported that Books 24x7 was a valuable resource, the usage of Books 24x7 during the pilot was much lower than the courses. Based upon resource constraints it would be difficult to leverage and take full advantage of the resource within the next six (6) to 12 months when compared with the expense (\$xxxxx) of Books 24x7. Future and further program development would include analysis and applicability of Books 24x7 for academic leadership and executive development.

It is anticipated that the cost of the online program when compared to the amount spent at the MAUs for learning and development would be justified if it alleviated even a fraction of that amount for tuition and external registrations in prior years. While it will not eliminate learning and development expenditures, it will allow for another option to provide employees with resources and fill a need which currently exists for those employees who have not been able to utilize learning and development offerings and identify themselves as needing or desiring more learning opportunities.

If this recommendation is approved, the 12 month access to online courses allows for the development of programs and tools and provides the ability to further review content, employee usage and the applicability toward a sustainable learning and development program.

A few conceptual plans to accompany implementation include:

- Offering a streamlined course list so employees can see course options which are mapped to core competencies identified in the job family descriptors.
- providing tools for supervisors and employees to initiate, monitor and update professional development and/or career development plans
- determining if completion of applicable online courses and other applicable training could reasonably be substituted as “experience” for certain positions or job families

The e-learning courses will not replace instructor-led courses nor are they intended to replace UA-specific learning and development offerings. The online material can be used to supplement traditional learning and development methods and provides another option for knowledge and skill development as a stand-alone resource.

In addition, if needed, an employee may complete identified courses and document it as credit toward recertification by programs such as Project Management Institutes PMP Certification, NASBA (National Association of State Boards of Accountancy), (ISC)2, ASQs Six Sigma, the Board of Registered Nurses and the Institute of Supply Management, Certified Financial Planner (CFP), and the Human Resource Certification Institute (HRCI).

This on-demand learning resource may serve as a springboard to the University's organizational and employee development culture. This online option provides employees and supervisors an opportunity to initiate conversations about current and future development needs related to an employee's job knowledge, skills and abilities. It also allows a cost-effective way for employees to take an active part in seeking out solutions to self identified needs and empowers them to make choices on their own professional and career development. Finally, having this online resource opens the door for University of Alaska supervisors to consider and map core competencies based upon its current and future workforce needs with learning and development options which are available at employees' fingertips.