

Long Distance Education at ILM

BY KATHLEEN HICKEY

The Institute of Logistical Management has been around for a long time — since 1923, to be exact. The organization is the oldest logistics long-distance learning program in the country and began as the Academy of Advanced Traffic, once owned by *Traffic World*.

Things have changed since then and so has ILM. Today the Burlington, N.J.-based learning center has courses in warehousing, transportation law, hazardous materials compliance, global logistics management and freight claims management. But it is still focused on learning logistics long distance.

In the past two years the school has received additional accreditations and added new courses and a faculty member, said Frank Breslin, dean and registrar of ILM and former vice president of transportation and distribution for Scott Paper Co. In mid-2001 the Distance Education Training Council, the largest distance education accreditation agency in the world, nationally accredited ILM, said Breslin. ILM and all its courses already were accredited by the American Council on Education, recognized and approved by the Veteran's Administration and recognized by DANTES, a group that handles distance learning for all U.S. service branches worldwide, he said.

And ILM has four new courses, all accredited: two in transportation law, one for both shippers and carriers on motor carrier operations and "a brand-new course just being released called introduction to transportation and logistics," said Breslin. The school now has 12 courses worth 35 transferable college credits, he said. It offers certification but no degrees.

The Council of Logistics Management also recognizes ILM and most recently the school signed a recognition agreement with the University of Phoenix, said Breslin. "I am not aware of any school that has not accepted our courses or credits," he said. Breslin joined ILM in March 1998.

The school's new faculty member, Michael D. Stroh, joined last summer, said Breslin. Stroh is the author of ILM's new introductory course and president of The Logistics Network, a logistics consulting firm.

"Many of our students have college degrees but there are also an enormous amount that have no college degree," he said. The typical student is in his or her late 30s or early 40s and is at the "not quite mid-management level," said Breslin. About 40 percent of ILM's students are female. The students want "to enhance their professional career and move to the next level," he said. Most are already in the field, said Breslin.

Not that the school is trying to limit its enrollment to this type of student, said Breslin. The introductory course may appeal to "someone just out of high school or college" who is interested in learning more about transportation and logistics, he said. ILM also is looking at developing courses for senior management, including CIOs and CFOs, and at recertification

courses for its Certified Logistics Practitioner offering, he said. Additionally the school is preparing to offer another course, on third-party logistics, which probably will be the school's next offering, said Breslin.

ILM has students on five continents, including a student in Denmark and one in Hong Kong, said Breslin. The school has no plans to expand its offering to include an associate's or bachelor's degree, said Breslin. "The competition offers all kinds of degrees. We do only this. In order to get those kinds of degrees we would probably have to go into areas that we are not expert at, like accounting, technology, marketing research or English. We don't feel that is our core skill," he said.

ILM's competition includes the Logistics Institute at the Georgia Institute of Technology, Pennsylvania State University, the University of Wisconsin, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and the Kellogg School of Management at Northwestern University, said Breslin. "They are all excellent programs. And many of our students have gone to some of these programs," he said. The difference is that ILM is completely distance-learning based and cheaper, he said.

Currently ILM students prefer not to have virtual classrooms, as that would require that they check in at a specific point during the day or week, said Breslin.

"What our students have told us is that it can be difficult to take the time out of work to check in, and if they miss that week, the professor moves on," he said. Plus students would need to print out the notes from the online chat, he said. "The majority still prefer to deal with a hardback text," said Breslin.

Instead the courses are independent self study, said Breslin. Interaction between the students and faculty is "very personalized," he said. Students have a maximum of six months to complete the course, but the average student completes a course in eight to 12 weeks, he said. The time can be extended for hardship cases, such as being called up for military duty.

Interested students are required only to have a high school diploma and the ability to read and speak English, said Breslin. Ideally they should have some comfort level with computers but some students fax in material to the school, he said. "Occasionally they have no computer or fax and they will mail us. But that is very, very rare," he said.

ILM focuses on helping students not only understand and improve their own transportation and supply-chain systems but impact the bottom line of their business, said Breslin. "We believe we provide the quality of education that you would get at the best schools but the faculty all have the experience of the real world," he said. Courses are "not about theory but about making a difference in your job," said Breslin.

For more information go to www.logistics-edu.com. Individuals are entitled to a one-time 5 percent tuition discount when enrollment is received within 45 days of completing the online contact form. ●

