The following is part of a memorandum from the president of Humana University.

“Last year the number of students who enrolled in online degree programs offered by nearby Omni University increased by 50 percent. During the same year, Omni showed a significant decrease from prior years in expenditures for dormitory and classroom space, most likely because instruction in the online programs takes place via the Internet. In contrast, over the past three years, enrollment at Humana University has failed to grow, and the cost of maintaining buildings has increased along with our budget deficit. To address these problems, Humana University will begin immediately to create and actively promote online degree programs like those at Omni. We predict that instituting these online degree programs will help Humana both increase its total enrollment and solve its budget problems.”

The writer of the argument recommends that the Humana university should ad online courses to their teaching programs because such classes has been shown to be successful economically based on the experience of Omni university. However, this recommendation cannot be accepted as it is in that it rests on a number of premises all of which can be challenged in one way or another.

The first problem with the argument is that the writer assumes in Omni university the decrease in the dormitory expenditure is directly related to the online programs. However, there might be no relationship between these two factors. There could be other reasons which can affect the university expenses such as: applying energy saving policies or encouraging students to participating in the preventive maintenance of the building and utilities. Furthermore, the increase in the enrollment rate in online courses of Omni is mentioned to be increased by fifty percent whereas there is no clear statistics of the exact number of the participants of last year and this year. The number of last year participants would be so minute that fifty percent increase is not as effective as we expect.

Another problem with the argument is that the writer assumes planning online courses in Humana university will compensate for the reduction of enrollment rate in past three years. However, there might be no relationship between providing online programs and number of students who enroll in the Humana university. There might be plenty of reasons which influence the low enrollment rate such as: high fees and expenses of Humana university compared to the other universities, inappropriate campus environment or the limited departments which leads to lower number of students looking for enrolling in this university.

The third problem with the argument is that the writer assumes online programs will be so successful that their income can cover the maintenance expenses of the university. There is no guarantee that online programs would be accepted among the students. There are plenty of other online courses designed and provided by the older institutions and universities which are well known among the students. Therefore, introduction of new online programs will probably need marketing budget and also require trained and professional staff who are high paid in order to design a competitive program for the university. Therefore, the recommendation itself can have economic burden on the university.

In the final analysis, the writer’s recommendation cannot be taken to be correct because as it was shown in the body paragraphs above, it depends on a number of assumptions premises each of which is questionable. The recommendation can only be accepted if the weaknesses already referred to are all removed.