

The Distance Education and Learning Technology Committee

Wednesday, January 22, 2014 at 3:30 pm in Brewster B-104

ATTENDANCE:

Regular members: Lida Cope, Elizabeth Hodge, Mark Moore, Karl Moore

Ex-officio: Chal Benson, Wendy Creasey, Ken Luterbach (Rep of VC for Research & Graduate Studies), Clayton Sessoms

Guest: Elmer Poe

AGENDA

- 1) Approval of November 27, 2013.

[Attached: Minutes]

Pending the online vote due to the lack of quorum

- 2) DELTC Committee – **DELTC Report on E-Learning Survey**

[Attached: *Initial Survey Report that focused on process for vetting of the Distance Education Policy at ECU; discussed*]

The group received fewer responses than anticipated. It was suggested that we send it out again. Some questions answered from a different perspective than what we were looking for (e.g. course evaluation mistaken for peer evaluation); how does your unit assess your readiness? EH emphasizes the importance of having this information.

- 3) DELTC Committee – **UNC Strategic Directions Report – Policy Recommendations, E-Learning Workgroup**

[Attached: *Reports of the UNC Strategic Directions Workgroup and Policy Recommendations, UNC E-learning Working Group; discussed*]

Wendy Creasey pointed out that our DE SACS document includes much of this information. When the group reviewed ECU's material, we agreed ECU does not yet have are student readiness modules.

Are there any questions about recommended changes?

UNC Strategic Directions Report – Policy Recommendations, E-Learning Workgroup (6 recommendations)

#1: “In the course of planning degree-related distance education activities, each constituent institution is urged to consider the potential for collaboration with other institutions in order to avoid unnecessary duplication. *Consultation with General Administration will be required for authorization to establish inter-institutional activities.*”

Inter-institutional collaboration, or agreement to coordinate DE activities, is stated here. Clayton Sessoms noted that Appendices C, F, H govern the approval of a new online

program and the phrase “consultation with General Administration” suggests there will be a formalized process in place for doing this.

#2: Recommended policy - changes in italics:

“The development and delivery of individual degree-related distance education courses are institutional responsibilities. Courses may be offered without prior approval of General Administration. However, institutions *must notify General Administration of all courses that are open to students who are not matriculating at the offering institution. Institutions must consent to such courses being listed on system-wide informational sources managed by General Administration.*

Elmer Poe pointed out that the process was already in place; therefore, this revision is not warranted. Clayton Sessoms noted that the process of updating is already set up as well. A lot of effort has already been put to the UNC Online, which this recommendation does not seem to acknowledge. He asked if the membership of the e-learning workgroup might not have much GA background because these recommendations don't seem to offer anything new. The UNCO already covers this; Elizabeth Hodge will take this assessment back to the e-learning group.

#3 The Committee charge reflects our work. The only changes that will need to be made are as follows:

“B. The committee reviews reports from the University Online Quality Council relevant to the effectiveness of the University's distance education policies and procedures.” - remove

“I. The chair or appointed representatives serves as an ex-officio member on the University Online Quality Council.” – remove

#4 Recommended policy - changes in italics:

“The institution must provide appropriate *online instructional readiness* training for faculty who teach in distance education programs. *Faculty must demonstrate an appropriate level of readiness before teaching online courses. Oversight of the design and implementation of readiness certification protocols must be subject to the advice and consent of governance bodies that include significant faculty participation.*”

#5 DE modules and governance through the DELTC -- in place (and see 3 above)

Recommended policy -- changes in italics

“The institution must provide adequate access to the range of student services appropriate to support the programs, including admissions, financial aid, academic advising, delivery of course materials, and placement and counseling. These services must be comparable to the quality and availability of such services provided to students enrolled in programs offered on-campus. *Oversight of these support services must be subject to the advice and consent of governance bodies that include significant faculty participation.*”

Elmer Poe asked about the SACS cycle is for reviewing this. Wendy Creasey said that we should do this annually. Several committee members thought the committee should review the document annually, so the committee was well informed, but an external

group with a formal role such as the SACs representative should coordinate having it updated. A representative on campus (Evelyn Brown) will get our recommendations and assure that our self-assessment is current/in compliance. (It is this representative's responsibility to determine how well this document reflects reality on campus. The Committee's responsibility is to make sure the document is continually updated.)

#6 Recommended policy - changes in italics:

"The institution must certify that students admitted to online courses or programs possess the requisite skills, knowledge, and equipment necessary for success in the online instructional environment. Institutions must have remedial programs for students who cannot demonstrate a certified readiness for online learning. Oversight of these certification protocols and remedial services must be subject to the advice and consent of governance bodies that include significant faculty participation"

P. 6 of the document describes what this "certified readiness" should look like. Wendy Creasey suggested that we may need another inter-campus committee that would design the modules for all groups involved (similar to what we have prepared for our online DE faculty). Karl Wuensch said that this should be a system-wide development.

Clayton Sessoms questioned the amount of online DE experience amongst the membership of the e-learning workgroup because the draft does not seem to be informed by such experience.

As for student readiness, it has to be clarified what is required. We would then need to build another layer to the infrastructure to set up some sort of a verification process.

Overall the group felt that we're asking to be held accountable for things we have already done and resolved; that the resourcefulness of ECU does not carry over to the discussions in the e-learning workgroup to make sure that the diversity of approaches to online learning within the System and of the amount of experience with it are taken into consideration.

Elmer Poe reminded the group that we do have a document that SACS has reviewed and was satisfied with.

Elizabeth Hodge noted that that the idea of one-size-fits-all seems to be driving the draft and recommendations will make our work more difficult and less efficient.

Action Item: draft feedback and send to Marilyn Sheerer as the co-chair of the e-learning workgroup as well as to other co-chair. The timeline for feedback was inadequate. We will ask for an opportunity to provide our feedback now.

Since this meeting, Elizabeth Hodge had drafted this feedback and the committee members weighed in (the deadline was January 30). She then sent it to both co-chairs and to the entire e-learning workgroup. **[The text of this feedback is attached – Appendix 1]**

Wendy Creasey emphasized that what we need to focus on is student readiness.

Elmer suggests perhaps there is a commercial product that we could use (and make it our own through local additions). Karl Wuensch said that one possibility would be to

design an-hour computer training course (designed at the system level) that all students would have to take before enrolling in DE courses.

DELTC Goals: Academic Year 2013-2014

Goal One: Present to the Faculty Senate our recommendation that faculty who serve as peer observers of online teaching be permitted to count that activity as an approved activity for the purposes of satisfying the annual DE professional development required of all faculty teaching online courses, but not more often than once every three years.

Goal Two: Review and align current support mechanisms in place at ECU to meet the policies outlined in the Strategic Directions Workgroup Reports, with focus on the E-Learning Workgroup.

Goal Three: Work with registrar's office to find a way that makes it easier for students, who are registering for classes, to tell whether the format of an offered class is face-to-face, hybrid, or online.

Goal Four: Develop a list of experts who can be consulted for assistance with pedagogy and technology relevant to online teaching.

Goal Five: Continue to review feedback and monitor the use of the DE Training Modules. Review new module added during 2013-2014 year, addressing ADA.

Goal Six: Discovering what policies university units have with respect to what types of activities are approved for satisfaction of the annual training required of those who teach online.

Goal Seven: Review of yet-to-be-released policy on pedagogical tools provided online by text book publishers.

Goal Eight: Discussion of the role of MOOCs at ECU.

New Business:

Next Steps:

1. Invite Registrar's office to next meeting to discuss registration format.
2. Ask Dorothy Muller to attend next meeting to discuss who the Office for Faculty Excellence consults to assist with pedagogy and technology.

The meeting adjourned at 4:55pm

Submitted
Lida Cope, The DELTC Secretary

(Appendix 1/next page)

Appendix 1 (finalized January 31, 2014):

Members of the Distance Education and Learning Technology Committee at East Carolina University met to discuss and review the E-learning workgroups Final Report Draft 4.1 and Policy Recommendations documents. The committees' primary responsibility is the review and recommendation of policies and procedures to enhance faculty teaching and student learning in distance education. The DELT Committees' comments, questions, and responses are presented below.

" In this is time of extreme resource scarcity these regulations will pull funds from other efforts and could result in fewer North Carolinians being served by e-learning activities."

Overall the committee believes that the document should recognize the diversity of the mission and population served by each institution through its e-learning efforts and the embedded and ongoing assessment efforts .These factors have created e-learning activities that are fitted to each university in differing ways to support the individual institutional missions and to serve their unique populations. At ECU the efforts are entirely integrated throughout the "traditional" learning structures while at other institutions they are part of a separate unit. We support our faculty and students as part of our comprehensive educational processes. There is no "different" experience for our students. Our efforts are subject to ongoing assessment and regular, periodic examination by SACS and a host of professional accreditation bodies. These standards are comprehensive in nature and consider all aspects of the learning process for all student experiences. The accreditors recognize and respect both the structure and the support efforts required to be successful. The proposed regulations seem to assume a one size/one experience fits the entire e-learning universe throughout UNC while it ignores the role of the regional and professional accreditation efforts as well as local internal measures. The result of the proposed regulations will require resources to duplicate long-ongoing efforts to ensure the quality of student experience at each institution without adding value to the processes or improving the student experience. In this is time of extreme resource scarcity these regulations will pull funds from other efforts and could result in fewer North Carolinians being served by e-learning activities.

If this document had appeared 15 years ago it would have been useful as we began to formulate e-learning at ECU.

Comments:

- On the majority of the items, we at ECU have faculty governance and input involved and I think everyone agreed that the general items in each amendment sounded ok. The issues of the group were related to the specificity of the items in the working group document.
- We thought requiring consent on all amendments and within the working group document since this could prove over burdensome and is extremely restrictive considering the broadness of the items included in the support list in the working group document. We recognize the areas where faculty governance does require consent and are supportive.
- E-Learning Environment – ECU has standards and primary systems, but in many areas faculty deviate and do not follow the standards. There are also varied policies, procedures, and platforms in each college, some directives are supported centrally and some are not. The original document requirements were written in a more neutral manner specifying minimum

system requirements. The detailed requirements of this document are too restrictive considering the support structure models on each campus.

- Instructor Readiness – The list of requirements for instructor readiness is very specific. We believe our DE training modules cover most of this, but we need to compare the list. We preferred the first document which in general required readiness of faculty and delegating authority to the individual campuses to develop the specific criteria.

- Support Staff Readiness – This is a new section. We believe the details in this section are the responsibility of the units that provide those services. It should not be the responsibility of a governance body to consent to whether these basic requirements are met. For example, ensuring student security and privacy, these are required by state auditors. Having a faculty governing body approve these standards provide an additional layer that we deem unnecessary. As for another item, ‘assessment of technological and academic support competencies’ this cannot be provided to a governing body; it is the responsibilities of the unit administrators to ensure their staff are meeting the needs of the university and part of their personnel evaluations. Each university has a different support model with different roles. We perceive training and ensuring there is a primary LMS that faculty have agreed upon are important requirements thus we recommend more broad requirements. For example, it could read that each institution will have qualified support staff to provide support in course design, that there will be a policy that makes intellectual property rules clear to faculty, that there will be a primary LMS, that basic tools will be provided and supported, etc... Here at ECU, we do not mandate hardware and software; we offer choices that were selected by having units’ input and tools that are supported by the central IT. The first document presented this requirement in a manner that could be easily adaptable across campuses. Many of the items in the document were in line with the SACS requirements.

- If the support staff readiness description stays as is, we believe the CIO’s council for the individual campuses must have an opportunity to review and offer feedback as well as Human Resources which govern SPA personnel.

- Use of the word ‘mustering’ in the policy may need to be examined.

- How will the E-Learning Policy be enforced? Terms like “assessment” need to be defined. How do they fit in with the regular governing bodies at each institution campuses with established processes and developed DE functions? At ECU DE is integrated in the core learning domains across the institution and there are not necessarily different tools or processes.

- The group felt the document was not written in a neutral tone, particularly compared to the original document. The first draft offered thoughtful and sufficiently broad recommendations. The most recent version has a micromanaging tone that discourages rather than encourages effective and efficient implementation across our diverse institutions and, within them, across our units. There were significant differences between the two reports.

- We support the concepts of faculty, student, and support staff readiness.

- What will GA provide?

Specific Comments on Amendments from Policy Recommendations:

1. Amendment to Chapter 400.1.1.2[G].B.5. –

- a. It is so broad it is hard to determine the **boundaries** of the “potential for collaboration” – this appears to mean collaboration to confer a degree from a particular program using faculty & online course resources from collaborating institutions - which in certain situations where expertise is spread out and collaboration would bring in the right faculty ratio, could be a great solution to offering some degrees online. Yet, for other programs this could be very detrimental. We strongly believe we should understand the boundaries of this

amendment and not give a blanket approval without further consideration. In its current format it does not offer any guidance as to how these crucial decisions will be made which can have significant financial impacts on certain programs.

2. Amendment to Chapter 400.1.1.2[G].G.5. A.

- a. In defining the support of the programs for students, ECU currently has #6 re: technology, but we believe in #5, technology support services should be added, since the document listed specifics as to needed support services stating “including admission, financial aid, academic advising, delivery of course materials and placement and counseling...”
- b. It should also be stated “including **but not limited to** admission, financial aid, academic advising, and delivery of course materials and placement and counseling...”