

Standing Committee Annual Report

Name of Committee or Council:

Online Course Committee

Chair

Spencer L. Buckner

Meeting Dates in Current Year:

09/29/2011, 11/14/2011, 12/12/2011,
02/14/2012, 03/13/2012, 04/03/2012 and
05/01/2012

Major Actions or Accomplishments:

- Dana Willett, the new Director for the Center for Extended and Distance Education, gave the committee an overview of the current status of the CEDE and his vision for the future of the Center.
- Discussed acquisition and use of SmarterMeasure: an online system to evaluate an individual's ability/readiness to take an online course. Discussions included how to provide remediation for those that require it and provide information to online instructors about students requiring remediation that are enrolled in their course. Possible pilot use in Fall 2012.
- Dana Willett presented an outline for an Online Teaching and Learning Workshop for faculty developing or revising online courses. The committee approved the original plan for a Summer Institute but further discussions and review have changed the direction to a series of short workshops to be made available in Fall 2012 and Spring 2013. Continued refinement of how and when the workshops will be implemented will take place over the summer.
- A continuing topic for the committee is the response rate for online student course evaluations. During the second half of the 2010/2011 school year the committee had a statement about the importance of the evaluations added to the preliminary instructions sent to the students. This year we monitored the changes to the response rates that may have resulted from the additions. While there was a slight improvement, it represented only a single data set and thus has limited statistical significance. Continued monitoring of the response rates will be required over the next few years. Several additional measures to improve the response rate were also looked at. A survey of published literature on the subject was conducted and the following were found to be effective:
 - Provide a mild grade incentive to students doing the evaluations. This would require a "Certificate of Completion" be provided to the students proving they have completed their evaluations. Mitzie Thompson, the individual in the CEDE responsible for administering the online student evaluations, was contacted and she indicated that this could be done with little difficulty. The committee approved requiring a "Certificate of Completion" be provided to all students in all online classes starting Fall 2012.
 - Provide "personal" communication via email from the online instructor to the online student emphasizing the importance of the online course evaluations.

Inclusion of anecdotal evidence (As a result of last year's evaluations I changed my course by ...) is encouraged.

- Provide a sweepstakes type reward (gift certificate, T-shirt, iPod, Kindle, etc.) for completing the evaluations. Implementing this may be difficult due to the requirement of anonymity in the evaluation process. The literature indicated this was not one of the more effective incentives anyway.
- A letter will be sent by the Committee to all faculty teaching online courses in the fall. The letter will outline the various measures faculty can take to improve their online student evaluation response rates.
- Provide the results of the evaluations to the students in a format similar to RateMyProfessor.com. This may be the most effective incentive to the students but it is also the most controversial. While the physical implementation of such a website would not be difficult, approval to set it up will be. Certainly, we would expect a vigorous debate in the faculty senate. The committee decided to put off exploring this option to the next school year.