

Standing Committee Annual Report

Name of Committee or Council:

Online Course Committee

Chair

Spencer L. Buckner

Meeting Dates in Current Year:

09/08/2010, 10/04/2010, 11/01/2010,
12/06/2010, 01/31/2011, 02/28/2011,
30/28/2011, 04/25/2011

Major Actions or Accomplishments:

- The committee began the year with discussions as to what, if anything, Distance Ed should do about online courses which have no course content in their D2L shell at the beginning of the semester. It was eventually decided that Distance Ed should begin by advising the appropriate department chair. As the start date for the semester nears, a second advisory should be sent to the chair and the appropriate dean. If there is still no content by the first day of class, an advisory should be sent to the chair, dean and provost. Distance Ed should never post anything more than an announcement such as "Your Instructor will post Course Content as soon as they are able" and that it is the responsibility of the department chairs to ensure there is an instructor for all their online courses and they have content posted in a timely manner.
- As has been the case for a number of years, the OLCC spent considerable time discussing what to do about the low response rate for student evaluations in online courses. The committee agreed to add a statement to the evaluations similar to the statement that is read to COSM on-campus classes stressing the importance of the evaluation process to improving teaching as well as the instructor's retention, tenure and promotion. The first appearance of the statement was the Ft. Campbell Spring I 2011 session and the response rate went from ~20% in 2010 to 29% in 2011. While this is still low, we felt that there was significant improvement. The committee will continue to watch for improvements in the response rates in future semesters and consider more ways to improve it.
- As a follow on to last year's approval of requiring QM and ADA compliance for all new or redeveloped online courses, the committee decided to change the way compensation for online course development is done. While the amount remains the same, it was decided to pay slightly over half after all appropriate evaluations are done and the course has been taught once and then pay the rest equally over the next two years. Additionally, Distance Ed was encouraged to provide additional training opportunities for new faculty and faculty developing or teaching online courses for the first time. While some of the training should be in-person, much of it should be through online delivery. Finally, all new or redeveloped online should follow a standard format which would be provided in a Master Shell D2L shell for the development/redevelopment. This master shell would be generated for the developer

by Distance Ed and all subsequent offerings of the course should be copies of the master shell with appropriate changes for specific semesters. As the developer is the individual being compensated for their efforts, only the developer can make changes to the master shell. Individual instructors should be strongly encouraged to follow the master shell as closely as possible.

- Due to concerns that some students are signing up for online courses without sufficient skills, the committee viewed a demonstration of a software suite called Smart Measure that evaluates a student's skills in an online environment. The Smart Measure system can also be used to evaluate instructors before they teach or develop online courses.

After the demonstration the committee was strongly in favor of the university purchasing the software and requiring all students to be evaluated. The primary concern was if the evaluation shows that a student does not have the needed skills to do well in an online course, how remediation would be offered. When the evaluations should be given was another concern. The committee felt it should be taken by incoming freshmen before their summer welcome and by any other student before they enroll in an online course. Also, how the students' academic advisor would be informed of the student's evaluation was an issue. The committee recommended that the Smart Measures scores should be made available to advisors through the Onestop advising page. As a result of the committee's recommendations, Distance Ed has purchased a number of trials of Smart Measures for evaluation. The committee will follow up on how Smart Measures is working in the next year.