Standing Committee Annual Report

Name of Committee or Council: Online Course Committee

Chair: Spencer L. Buckner, Associate Professor, Department of Physics &
                                                                                Astronomy

Meeting Dated in Current Year: September 6, 2007; October 4, 2007;
                                 November 1, 2007; December 6, 2007;
                                 February 7, 2008; April 3, 2008

Major Actions or Accomplishments:

The Online Course Committee (OLCC) met each month during the fall semester and twice during the spring semester. Much of the activity this academic year dealt with the Quality Matters initiative, the ClassClimate online student evaluation system and the transition from Blackboard to Desire-2-Learn (D2L). Several other matters such as faculty compensation for course updating/rebuilding, A-number security and email in D2L and changes to the Handbook for Online Course Development were also discussed by the committee.

At the first meeting in September a Quality Matters subcommittee was formed with Samantha Penney, instructional technologist from Distance Education, as chair. That subcommittee met several times during the fall with a final proposal presented to the full OLCC during the December meeting. At the February meeting it was decided to pilot the initiative during the spring semester followed by full implementation during fall 2008. The Quality Matters rubrics are now reflected in the guidelines and instructions for developing online courses found in the Faculty Resources section of the APSU Extended Education website.

Although a separate advisory committee was formed to oversee the implementation of the ClassClimate online student evaluation system, the OLCC was briefed on its progress several times. Dr. Stanley Groppel was a member of the ClassClimate committee as well as the OLCC so we were able to have significant input into the pilot project which took place during the fall semester. Of specific interest were comparisons in response rates between online and face-to-face evaluations, insuring the evaluation questions were the same between online and face-to-face evaluations, differences in the report format between ClassClimate and the face-to-face systems and student confusions with how they are notified they are to do ClassClimate surveys. While some of the results of the fall pilot were made available to the OLCC, a final report was not received before our last meeting in April.

Another matters which was of concern, although not under the direct jurisdiction of the OLCC, was A-number security between D2L, campus email and Banner. Class rolls and email in D2L use student A-numbers as identification and there was some concern that students could access other students A-numbers through D2L. Since all on-campus courses also have a D2L shell this was of considerable importance and was the topic of much discussion by the committee. The matter was eventually solved by eliminating the use of A-numbers in D2L along with changes to the log-In username in the campus email system. These changes have been put in place effective summer 2008.

Two final items that were under the jurisdiction of the OLCC were faculty compensation for developing, updating or redevelopment online courses and changes to the Handbook for Online Course Development. A new compensation package for faculty who develop or redevelop online courses was presented to the committee. The package allows for different levels of compensation depending on the amount of work done (i.e. the use of a publisher course cartridge is compensated at a lower level that if the course is developed entirely by the faculty member). The new compensation package was approved by the committee and given to Dr. Stanley Groppel, Dean of Extended and Distance Education, for implementation. Changes to the Handbook for Online Course Development are an ongoing process required to maintain current technology and pedagogical best practices. Only minor changes were made this year but, with the change from Blackboard to D2L, next year will require significant changes to the handbook and will need to be a high priority for the OLCC.