Distance Learning Committee Minutes

December 2, 2014 Meeting Minutes

Attendance: Carol Berger, Ronny Bull, Russell Kahn, Jennifer Klimek-Yingling, Zhanjie Li, Naren Peddibhotla, Steven Schneider, Donna Silsbee, Kevin Volo

The meeting was called to order at 12:35 p.m.

Review of the Minutes of the November Meeting

Changes were made to the section of the minutes titled: Proposed Distance Learning Classroom. The minutes were approved as amended

Plan to keep online courses open for students after the course was taken

Carol Berger reported she contacted the host provider for our online courses. It appears there would be no problem (and no additional cost) if we choose to keep the courses open for five years after the student takes the course. That statement assumes we will continue with about the same enrollment in online courses and about the same number of online courses. Since the Committee wants to do this, we will include it in the Distance Learning Policy which will be developed by this Committee.

Carol also reported on a survey of the current online Faculty. The majority of the Faculty members wanted the courses to stay open for either 21 days or 7 days after the end of the term. An option to keep the courses open for several years was not given as part of the survey.

Faculty Assembly Bylaws Amendment

Donna Silsbee stated the Bylaws Amendment to change the name and purpose of the Committee was presented to the Faculty Assembly. It will be voted on at the January meeting.

Angel to Blackboard Learn Migration

Kevin reported the migration training sessions will continue into December and also into the Spring 2015 semester.   The online Faculty is now preparing courses for migration. Carol reported the kick-off meeting with the back-end people recently took place. The first migrations will begin in late February.

The first training sessions to teach Blackboard learn will probably start in March for those instructors who will be teaching online courses in the Summer and Fall 2015 terms.

Provost Durgin's response to Distance Learning Classroom

The provost disagreed with the Committee's comments and explained there is a need for a web conferencing center especially with the emergence of the two campuses in Utica and in Albany. The Chair stated further discussion on this topic was probably not appropriate. She directed committee members with further concerns to the Technology Committee.

CIT 2015

CIT 2015 *Rising to Meet Our Challenges: Preparing for Global Success* will be held May 26-29 at SUNY Geneseo. The deadline to submit an abstract is December 31. The Chair encouraged Committee members to submit abstracts.

Distance Learning Coordinator

In follow-up to questions regarding the distance learning coordinator position, Dr. Durgin asked for a copy of the job description from last year. Carol Berger will send the document to him.

Compliance Review: Textbook & Supplemental Materials Information for Students

Dr. Peddibhotla informed the Committee the college is currently not in compliance with the 2010 amendments to the Higher Education Opportunity Act which requires advance notice to students regarding the textbooks and supplemental materials needed for courses. This information is to be made available at the time of advance registration. He moved that Banner be the official means to communicate this information. The motion was approved. The Chair will put the motion on the agenda of the next Faculty Assembly Executive Committee meeting.

Compliance Review: Identify Verification

Carol stated the official SUNY policy is that identity is verified through the use of the student's login and PIN. SUNY as a whole is looking into this issue to make sure the system is in compliance.

Several faculty members stated the current practice is insufficient and they discussed cases where problems have occurred. The Health Sciences Faculty added a policy which requires proctored exams for online courses. Students must present photo IDs to the exam proctors. This may require students to pay a fee to an outside organization such as Sylvan Learning to have the exams proctored. Kevin Volo said Empire State College uses ProctorU which seems to be an ideal solution. He started discussions with Proctor U last year after the Health Sciences Faculty requested a solution to the testing problem. The Health Sciences Faculty recommended ProctorU to Provost Durgin. However, no response has been communicated to the Health Sciences Faculty.

The Committee discussed a number of options for verification of a student's identity in the online courses:

- Biometric identification such as a finger print. Students would then need to obtain a finger print scanner.
- Use of smart cards for student ID cards. Students would then need to have a card scanner.
- RFID-enabled student ID cards. Again, a scanner would be needed.
- Require all student ID cards have student photos.
- Use of the technology fee to implement the above types of technology in the student ID card.

Ronny Bull agreed to discuss this issue with the College Association. He will also do further investigation of our options for discussion at the next meeting.

Distance Learning Policy

Donna Silsbee said we need to produce a distance learning policy by the end of the academic year. The Committee already has a copy of a draft policy distributed by Carol Berger last year to the Provost's Distance Learning Committee. Kevin Volo said Empire State College has a good example of a policy.

Donna will try to obtain a copy of the Empire State College policy and she will start to work on a policy over the break between the semesters.

Strategic Planning – SWOT Analysis

Donna Silsbee presented a draft SWOT analysis *(see attached)* based on previous Committee discussions. The following suggestions were made to the draft:

- Strengths (S)
    - Change item 3 to state that technical training is available to the Faculty.
    - Add the MBA program is nationally ranked by U.S. News and World Report. It is in the top 110 programs nationally.
    - Add the Learning Management System (LMS) is nationally recognized.
    - Add SUNY is a strategic partner with Blackboard.
    - Delete Quality Matters Certifications since SUNY is no longer associated with Quality Matters. It may be replaced by a different system.
- Weaknesses (W)
    - The lack of a Distance Learning Coordinator should be the first item with many of the other weaknesses attributed to that problem.
    - Add there is no contingency plan for a disaster situation.
    - Add there is a lack of understanding of how program rankings are used for marketing.
    - Add there are no minimum requirements for students to participate in online courses.
    - Add the loss of Quality Matters and the unknown situation about its replacement (if any).
    - Add a general lack of support for online learning.
    - Add a lack of course review for ADA compliance and overall course quality.
    - Add the IDT program tests new technologies but there is no venue to share this information with the rest of the Faculty.
    - Add a weak leak in the authentication process is the authentication server is currently located on this campus. If it breaks down, no authentication can take place.
    - Add with the addition of the Albany campus, there is a need for synchronous classes to take place on both campuses.
    - Add we are using 1980s era online learning technology. Although we were a leader at one time, we have not kept up with the technology. We may no longer be competitive in the online learning market.
    - Add the loss of the Quality Matters program.
    - Add no oversight of online course quality.
    - Add the Faculty does not have access to the services of an instructional designer.
    - Add it is unclear if the student identity management system is in compliance with Federal law.
- Opportunities
    - Add the ability to add on-campus faculty workshops after classes are over and before the academic obligation ends. Use the IDT and other knowledgeable faculty members as conference designers and presenters.
    - Add more faculty members could attend the annual CIT conference.
    - Add several academic programs could benefit from placing student interns with the proposed distance learning coordinator.

- o   Add the need to deliver general education offerings to students on the Albany campus.
  - o   Add the colleges on the Albany campus do not currently use distance learning.
  - o   Add the ability to use experts from around the world as course instructors and/or guest lecturers.
  - o   Add the continual emergence of new technologies to enhance the teaching/learning process.
- Threats
  - o   Add OPEN SUNY courses available from other campus.
  - o   Add MOOC.
  - o   Add lack of budget support for distance learning.
  - o   Add largely undefined vision for distance learning in the current strategic plan.

The Committee will continue to refine the SWOT analysis as it begins work on the strategic plan. The Committee agreed that several items on the analysis could be used to form the job description for a distance learning coordinator and instructional designers.

Donna Silsbee

Recorder

Distance Learning SWOT Analysis *(Draft)*

Strengths (S)	Weaknesses (W)
1. Many years of experience in offering asynchronous, online courses 2. Current online programs have healthy enrollments. 3. Technical training provided to the faculty 4. Relatively low-cost SUNY tuition 5. Online general education offerings help all students meet degree requirements 6. Help desk provided by host for current online courses. 7. Attractiveness of online course for returning adult students who work, have families to care for, and are place bound. 8. Several members of the faculty are Quality Matters Certified.	1. Lack of faculty training in online pedagogy 2. Practice of hiring faculty members with no online teaching experience and scheduling them to teach online their first semester with little or no support. 3. Lack of faculty research & publication in online pedagogy. 4. Lack of faculty interest in distance learning. 5. Lack of a formal system to provide student identity verification to assure integrity in testing and assessment. *(Naren suggests that all SUNY Poly students be required to have photo university ID cards so students can be identified by face.)* 6. Lack of a full complement of online courses prevents some programs from being totally online. 7. Less experience in offering synchronous online courses 8. Less experience in other distance learning technologies 9. Reliance on an external organization to host online courses. 10. Lack of complete functionality for mobile devices in current online courses. 11. Student misperceptions of online courses. Example: some students think online courses are self-paced and not on a semester schedule. 12. Lack of variety in distance learning technologies offered to the faculty. 13. Lack of a distance learning coordinator 14. Lack of support services for online students 15. Students lose access to the online course shortly after it ends. 16. Lack of a periodic assessment of the impact of distance education on the institution's resources and its ability to

	fulfill its institutional mission and goals.
	17. Lack of a distance learning policy.
Opportunities (O) 1. Emergence of Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) 2. Open SUNY 3. Need to deliver courses at the SUNY Poly Albany campus 4. Migration from Angel to Blackboard Learn may solve some of our problems. 5. Emerging technologies	**Threats (T)** 1. Competition from other colleges 2. Unscheduled outages in online courses due to SUNY Poly, host, or intermediary issues. 3. Major power outages make it impossible for students and/or faculty to access the courses. 4. Possible loss of institutional and/or program accreditations if course integrity issues are not resolved.