

Approved February 2, 2016

Distance Learning Committee Minutes

December 1, 2015 Meeting Minutes

Attendance: Katherine Evans, Russell Kahn, Jennifer Klimek-Yingling, Naren Peddibhotla, Steven Perta, Shannon Pritting, Donna Silsbee, Elizabeth Tolman

The meeting was called to order at 12:34 p.m.

Review of Minutes

The minutes of the November meeting were approved as distributed.

Director of Distance Learning

Shannon Pritting, Chair of the Search Committee, reported the Committee was in the process of setting up phone interviews for some of the candidates.

Distance Learning Policy

The Committee finalized its review of the draft Distance Learning Policy. See attached policy at the end of the minutes. Donna said Maarten Heyboer, CoChair of the SUNY Poly Governance Council directed us to send the draft to himself and Jim Castracane (the CoChair at the Albany site). Since this is to be a SUNY Poly policy, it should first be reviewed by the Governance Council. From there it will be sent to the governance bodies at the two sites.

ProctorU

No one seems to know where the ProctorU contract which was obtained by the Nursing Department went. As a result, it has not been signed and we will continue to rely on human proctors for the Fall 2015 final exams. Donna will continue to investigate this issue.

Open SUNY Readiness Assessment

The Faculty Assembly Executive Committee was given a document that stated SUNY Poly is doing an Open SUNY Readiness Assessment. Donna asked if any of the Committee members were involved in the assessment. None of the Committee members were aware of this. As a result, it was suggested that Valerie Fusco be contacted.

SUNY Poly Strategic Plan – Draft

The Committee reviewed those parts of the Strategic Plan that dealt with Distance Learning. It was noted that the Director of Distance Learning was a hiring priority for SUNY Poly. Overall, the Committee determined that Distance Learning was appropriately covered in the plan.

IDEA evaluations problem

Naren stated that the IDEA evaluations were supposed to turn on yesterday in his Blackboard courses. However, as of the date of this meeting, they were not yet on. Beth volunteered to follow-up on this issue.

Turnitin Not Working

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Beth informed the Committee that Turnitin has not been working since Blackboard upgraded and the link to Turnitin was broken. At this time, we do not know when it will be fixed and this is an issue outside our control. Beth agreed to send out a notification to the entire Faculty.

Staff support for Blackboard

Beth continues in her role as manager of the SUNY Poly help desk. She and Kevin have been trained in Blackboard and can help both students and faculty. At this time, there has not been a decision about replacing Carol Berger or how her former duties will be assigned. Donna will follow-up with Andrew Bellinger to ask about the status of Carol's position.

Zoom for use in future meetings

Russ Kahn suggested the use of Zoom for future meetings since Katherine works at the Albany site and the rest of the Committee works at the Utica site. The Committee has been using conference calls. Russ will send some information about Zoom to Donna. We will need to contact IT to obtain a business account.

The meeting adjourned at 1:49 p.m.

Donna Silsbee, Chair

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Academic Distance Learning Policy

Introduction:

“Distance education or distributed learning is a formal educational process that uses technology to deliver instruction to students who are separated from the instructor and to support regular and substantive interaction between the students and the instructor, either synchronously or asynchronously. The technology may include the Internet, one-way and two-way transmissions through open broadcast, closed circuit, cable, microwave, broadband lines, fiber optics, satellite, or wireless communication devices; audio conferencing; or video cassettes, DVDs, and CD-ROMs if used in a course in conjunction with any of the technologies listed.” (Middle States Commission on Higher Education, Characteristics of Excellence in Higher Education: Requirements of Accreditation and Standards for Affiliation, Revised March 2011, p. 57.)

Responsibility for the development of an Academic Distance Learning Policy was assigned to the newly-formed Online Learning Committee of the Utica Site Faculty Assembly at the start of the fall 2014 semester. At the start of the spring 2015 semester, the Committee was renamed the Distance Learning Committee. Distance Learning is a standing committee of the Utica site Faculty Assembly. All SUNY Poly policies developed by the Committee are submitted to the SUNY Poly Governance Council for consideration.

Preamble: This policy covers all academic aspects of distance learning including, but not limited to the design, delivery, and evaluation of all credit-bearing courses. The intent of the policy document is to provide guidance on matters that are not ordinarily the subject of policies that relate to on-campus education. Where policies are established for on-campus education, the same shall apply to distance education.

Purposes: The Academic Distance Learning Policy seeks to create a learning environment where:

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1. Students in distance learning courses achieve learning outcomes and experience levels of rigor comparable to students in traditional, on-campus courses.
2. With reasonable accommodation, distance learning courses are accessible to students with disabilities.
3. The Administration can be assured learning is taking place within the framework of accreditation standards and both state and federal laws, rules, and regulations.
4. Distance Learning is seen as a major contributor to helping the Institute achieve its mission, vision, goals, and strategic plan.

Definitions: The following definitions of the different types of course offerings are adopted from report titled *The Power of SUNY Report Card: Metric Definitions* (May 2013, Item No: 07.1 -07.1):

- *On-line* – requiring all direct instruction to be completed on-line
 - *Synchronous* – Direct instruction occurs in real time without time delay
 - *Asynchronous* – Direct instruction occurs under time delay; that is, direct instruction is recorded/stored and accessed later.
 - *Combined On-line* – Direct instruction combines both Synchronous and Asynchronous types.
- *Hybrid/Blended/Partial* – requiring part of direct instruction (0.01% - 99.9%) to be completed on-line.
- *Direct Instruction* – communication of curricular content excluding advisement, office hours, homework assignments, and help sessions.
- *Web-Enhanced Course or Content* – Online course activity complements class sessions without reducing the number of required class meetings (these activities are not counted as on-line instruction).

Policy

I. Business Continuity Planning

A. Sudden Unavailability of the Instructor during the Academic Term

An instructor may suddenly become unavailable during the academic term due to death, illness, injury, or a family emergency. If the instructor is not available, SUNY Poly will follow the same policy used when an instructor for an on-campus course is unavailable.

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II. Coordination with Faculty Assembly Technology Committee

If the current Chair of the Utica site faculty Technology Committee is not appointed as a College representative to the Utica site Distance Learning Committee, the Chair will be invited to participate as an Ex Officio member of the Utica site Distance Learning Committee.

III. Coordination with Director of Distance Learning

The Director of Distance Learning is a staff position at SUNY Polytechnic Institute. The Director is invited to participate as an Ex Officio Member of the Utica site Distance Learning Committee. It is expected that all matters of academic policy related to distance learning will be submitted to the Committee for review and for action by the full Faculty.

IV. Coordination with Information Technology Services

One or more members of SUNY Poly Information Technology Services (ITS) will be invited to join the Utica site Distance Learning Committee as Ex Officio members to facilitate communication and joint decision making with the Faculty. It is expected that all decisions about the operation of the learning management system that affect the Faculty and the Students will first be discussed and negotiated with the Utica site Distance Learning Committee. In some cases it may be appropriate to forward a motion from the Utica site Distance Learning Committee to the full Faculty for consideration.

V. Faculty

1. Control of the Distance Learning Curricula

Control of all aspects of the curriculum remains the responsibility of the SUNY Poly Faculty. All Utica site proposals for new or revised undergraduate courses and programs must be presented to the Curriculum Committee of the Utica site Faculty Assembly. All Utica site proposals for new or revised graduate courses and programs must be presented to the Graduate Council of the Utica site Faculty Assembly.

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The recommendations of the Curriculum Committee and the Graduate Council are presented to the Provost for action.

Reference: Bylaws of the Utica site Faculty Assembly, Article 2 Powers and Responsibilities of the Faculty, Section I and Article and Article 5 Standing Committees, Section III. B. Curriculum Committee and Section III. E. Graduate Council.

2. Obligation to Prepare and Submit Course Syllabi

Distance learning instructors are required to follow the same policies and procedures required of the on-campus instructors. Syllabi are to be prepared before the start of each term for each course and submitted to the leader of the relevant academic unit as well as to the Provost. The instructor will follow the Provost's guidelines for syllabus development.

3. Textbook/Supplemental Materials Selection Process for Distance Learning Courses

The Faculty is encouraged to participate, as appropriate, in the OPEN SUNY Affordable Learning Solutions (ALS) program which provides free learning materials (including open access textbooks) for students and an opportunity for faculty members to publish their learning materials for use by the entire SUNY system. However, the decision about course material is the sole prerogative of the Faculty.

4. Obligation to Submit Information Regarding Textbooks and Supplemental Materials

Distance learning instructors are required to follow the same policies and procedures required of the on-campus instructors for timely submission of textbooks and supplemental materials information to the SUNY Poly bookstore

5. Hardware, Software, and Network Requirements for Courses

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Individual faculty members and/or academic units will determine the hardware, software, and network requirements for student participation in distance learning courses. Those requirements will be communicated to students via the course syllabus and in official publications.

Faculty members who wish to have additional software available for students or who wish to have software updated must make sure an appropriate license is obtained and must work with SUNY Poly Information Technology Services to have the software made available.

6. Course or Program Assessment/Continuous Quality Improvement

Assessment and continuous quality improvement of distance learning courses and programs follows the same policies applied to all courses, programs, and majors. Periodic assessment of student outcomes and any necessary changes or revisions to improve quality begins with the individual faculty member each time a course is taught and continues at the academic unit level. At the Utica site, reports are presented to the Academic Quality Committee of the Faculty Assembly. The Academic Quality Committee Acting on behalf of the Assembly, considers and approves/disapproves all additions, deletions, and changes to assessment plans.

Individual faculty members and academic units are also highly encouraged to conduct evaluations of their distance learning courses using a rubric suggested by OPEN SUNY or created by a nationally recognized provider.

The Utica site Distance Learning Committee will work with the Director of Distance Learning to evaluate, adopt, and recommend a nationally-recognized system for evaluating the quality of the distance learning program at the Institute and the level of institutional commitment to distance learning. Results of the yearly quality review and recommendations for the future will be shared with the appropriate committees of the Faculty Assembly, with the Assembly as a whole and with the Governance Council.

7. Exam proctors

Faculty members who administer course examinations through the use of distance learning technology may require the use of approved external proctors or approved proctor technologies to verify the student enrolled in the course is the person who is taking the examination. Students must present a government-issued photo identification card to the proctor or the proctoring service to verify their identities. Faculty members will announce the requirement for proctored exams in the course syllabus. They will also direct the student to suitable proctors.

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8. Instructor Availability to Students

Distance learning instructors are to be available to students through the use of on-campus office hours, online office hours, and/or the use of various communication technologies. Expectations for office hours are communicated to the Faculty by the leader of the academic unit.

10. Faculty Use of Distance Learning Technology

No faculty member is required to use distance learning technology unless:

- it was specifically stated as a requirement in the notice of the job opening or in that faculty member's initial appointment letter, reappointment letters, or continuing appointment notice.
- the Faculty of the academic unit vote to adopt the use of distance learning technology in the courses offered by that unit

11. Faculty Training, Mentoring, and Ongoing Development

It is the responsibility of the leadership of the academic unit and the Director of Distance Learning to make sure individual faculty members who are engaged in the use of distance learning technologies receive the appropriate training and mentoring in distance learning technology before they teach their first distance learning course.

Except in the case of unusual circumstances, entry-level training should occur before the start of the academic term where distance learning is to be used. The Institute and/or OPEN SUNY will offer training in the use of the learning management system.

New instructors should also be limited to teaching just one distance learning course in their first semester. They should be assigned experienced instructors as mentors for at least the first term where distance learning is used. It is understood experienced instructors may not be available if the instructor is piloting new distance learning technology.

The Utica site Distance Learning Committee of the Faculty Assembly will work with the Director of Distance Learning to offer educational sessions on distance learning topics.

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12. Development of a New Course/Substantial Revision of an Existing Course using Distance Learning Technology – New Faculty Member

In no case should a new, inexperienced faculty member be asked to develop a distance learning course or substantially revise a distance learning course to be offered during the faculty member's first semester of employment.

The only exception would be if the faculty member comes to the Institute with extensive background in the distance learning technology used in the course.

13. New or Substantially Modified Distance Learning Courses or Programs

New or substantially modified distance learning courses or programs are subject to the same review process as on-campus courses and programs. At the Utica site, this includes review by the following standing committees of the Faculty Assembly: Academic Quality (undergraduate offerings), Curriculum Committee (undergraduate offerings), Graduate Council (graduate offerings), and the Planning and Budget Committee. The Provost must also approve these actions before they are submitted to the SUNY system and to the State Education Department for review and approval.

14. Ownership and Sharing of Course Content

The faculty member is the owner of the distance learning course content. Permission is required from the faculty member before the course or any part of it is shared with other faculty members. A faculty member is not obligated to share course content with another faculty member.

An exception would be if SUNY Poly paid extra compensation or gave a reduced teaching load for the development of a course with the express written intent it would be shared with other faculty members.

Each academic unit appoints an individual to be responsible for obtaining permission for course sharing and for copying the course from one faculty member's learning management system (LMS) account to another faculty member's LMS account.

Reference: SUNY Copyright and Faculty Ownership of Intellectual Property

15. Research and Innovation

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Research and innovation in the use of different distance learning technologies is encouraged. Faculty members interested in the use of different technologies shall coordinate any requests for additional funding with their respective academic leaders. Courses offered with these technologies are subject to the same periodic assessment and continuous quality improvement required of all other courses.

16. Online Course Backups

Instructors are responsible for backing up their courses regularly during the development phases and while the course is running.

VI. Helpdesk Services

OPEN SUNY operates a helpdesk for technical issues associated with the learning management system. It is available to both students and faculty.

Since SUNY Poly operates the authentication server and the server for course software applications, the SUNY Poly helpdesk is contacted for sign-on issues with the learning management system or the course software server. It also provides end-user support for the learning management system.

VII. Identity Management System

Faculty, staff, and students use the SUNY Poly secured logins and passwords. In addition, all students sign a *Statement of Responsibility Agreement* and a *Computing and Network Resources Statement of Responsibility*. The policies governing passwords are described in the *SUNY Poly Information Technology Services Password Policy*.

VIII. Learning Management System (LMS)

SUNY Poly partners with the OPEN SUNY initiative of the Academic Affairs Committee of the SUNY Board of Trustees and the SUNY Chancellor's Office. The choice of a learning management system for online-enabled courses rests with OPEN SUNY. Partnering campuses provide input into the decision-making process.

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The decision to remain a member of OPEN SUNY and the choice of a learning management system is a decision made by the SUNY Poly Faculty in collaboration with the Administration of the Institute.

IX. Library Services

Distance Learning Faculty and Students are afforded the same access to the SUNY Poly Library services as are the on-campus Faculty and Students:

- Most of SUNY Poly Library's content is available digitally, and students and faculty can use electronic resources from anywhere off-campus.
- SUNY Poly's Library also maintains a page specifically for online/distance learners.
- SUNY Poly's Library provides a variety of online and in-person help services including a 24 hour/7day a week librarian chat service.
- Distance students are also welcome to use the Utica Site's library spaces.
- Library services are also integrated into the Learning Management System.

X. Plagiarism Warning System

Distance Learning Faculty and Students are afforded the same access to the plagiarism warning and prevention system as are the on-campus Faculty and Students.

XI. Students

1. Access to Distance Learning Courses

On a space-available basis, distance learning courses are open to any student who has the required course prerequisites and the required course co-requisites. Exceptions would be:

- A. courses restricted by level or by major.
- B. International students who are attending SUNY Poly on an F-1 student visa are subject to policies specified by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, U.S. Immigrations and Customs Enforcement. They should work with the International Student Services Office at SUNY Poly to determine the appropriateness of using distance education courses in their programs of study.
- C. students whose disabilities cannot be reasonably accommodated. Students with disabilities should work with the SUNY Poly Office of Disability Services to determine reasonable accommodations.

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Online courses remain open to students for 30 days after the end of the term except when:

- An individual faculty member chooses to extend student access to the course for a period of up to four years.
- The Institute can no longer afford the storage costs for four years of old courses.
- The learning management system becomes unstable due to the amount of data being stored.

The Utica site Distance Learning Committee will request yearly updates from Information Technology Services on the second and third bulleted items listed above. The Committee will then notify the appropriate faculty governance group of the situation and it will prepare motions to the group as needed.

2. Auditing Online Courses

Online and hybrid courses are not available for audit.

Reference: SUNY Poly Registration and Billing Guide

3. Training in Distance Learning Technology

OPEN SUNY includes tutorials within the learning management system to orient students and train students in the use of the system.

When other types of distance learning technology are used, it is the responsibility of the course instructor to train the students in the use of the technology.

4. Ownership of Intellectual Property

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Original materials produced by the students as part of their course assignments are the property of the student and they may not be used by the instructor for any other purpose without express written consent of the student.

XII. Retention of Online Courses

OPEN SUNY and/or SUNY Poly Information Technology Services are responsible for archiving online courses.

Reference: *SUNY Records Retention and Disposition Policy (Document Number 6609), Appendix titled Academic Affairs and Instruction*

XIII. Annual Policy Review and Update

The Utica site Distance Learning Committee will review this policy on an annual basis. The Committee will propose updates to the appropriate governance group as needed.

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Approvals:

Co-Chairs, SUNY Poly Governance Council

Provost

President and Chief Executive Officer
