

Distance Learning Committee Minutes

March 3, 2015 Meeting Minutes

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

The meeting was called to order at 12:31 p.m.

Director of Distance Learning

Dr. Durgin attended the meeting to discuss the proposed position for the Director of Distance Learning. Dr. Dugin stated he had the approval to fill the position and that he would like to have the Director in place by the start of the 2015-2016 Academic Year. This means the search will need to take place this semester. This will be a management confidential position and the Director will have budgetary authority.

He had some questions and comments about the proposed job description (see attached) sent to him by the Distance Learning Committee:

1. First paragraph, discussion of strategic vision: Is this for SUNY Poly or for distance learning? The Committee stated the distance learning vision would need to be consistent with the vision for SUNY Poly. Dr. Durgin stated the vision and strategic plan developed for distance learning should explain:
 - what we want to do.
 - how much it costs.
2. First paragraph, page 2 – The job description states the instructional designers and the instructional technologists would report to the director. Does this mean Kevin Volo and Carol Berger would need to be reassigned to this new department? The Committee responded that Kevin would need to be reassigned and Kevin expressed agreement with that recommendation. Carol stated she is part of the IS department and she has other duties in addition to those related to distance learning. Dr. Durgin stated he would discuss Carol's position with the Chief Information Officer to determine where Carol's position would most appropriately be assigned.
3. Responsibilities and duties, #2 outcomes assessment: Dr. Durgin stated the Director would need to work with Dr. Joanne Joseph and Ms. Valerie Fusco on this task. He would expect the Director to benchmark SUNY Poly against other SUNY campuses and against national best practices. This would include the need to maintain compliance with Federal laws such as FERPA and ADA. He would expect to see metrics related to student satisfaction, student perception of ease of communication with instructors, and student satisfaction with advisement.
4. Responsibilities and duties, #3: Dr. Dugin recommended a change in wording from "consent" to "consult".
5. Responsibilities and duties, #5: Dr. Durgin was pleased to see a statement regarding funding and a resource model as part of the Director's responsibilities. As a result of increased enrollment and revenue generated by the Director of Distance Learning, we will be able to fund the position.
6. Responsibilities and duties, #5: Dr. Durgin asked if the ability to write grants is an essential skill for this position. He asked what kinds of grants might be obtained and from what sources.

7. Responsibilities and duties, #9: This could be deleted since the instructional designers and the instructional technologists will report to the Director.
8. Responsibilities and duties, #12: Should this work be performed by Ms. Fusco? The Committee stated the Director of Distance Learning should collaborate with the Director of Institutional Research,
9. Required qualifications: A PhD is preferred but not required.
10. Years of experience: Is 5 years required? The Committee stated it was a general guideline as it was determined some experience in higher education was needed. Dr. Durgin stated he would be looking for management and leadership skills as well as technical prowess.
11. Interactive computer communications could be stated as digital collaborative technologies. Russ gave Zoom and Collaborate as examples.
12. What standards must be considered? The Committee identified accreditation requirements. HOEA, and identity verification. Dr. Durgin stated he was very concerned about the identity verification issue.
13. Should the Director be responsible to ensure a consistent look and feel of the SUNY Poly courses? The Committee agreed that would be important as a way of branding the SUNY Poly offerings.
14. Should the Director be enforcing policy requiring certain minimum standards? Examples given were ADA compliance, balance between academic freedom and the quality for which SUNY Poly is responsible. The Committee stated the Director should provide instruction to the faculty about quality rubrics and encourage compliance with the OPEN SUNY quality rubrics program.
15. What about the Albany Faculty? The Committee stated the Director would be responsible for providing the same level of service to the Albany Faculty. Carol Berger suggested we could have interns from the University at Albany Ph.D. program in Education Theory and Practice mentor some of our online programs.

Dr. Durgin will consult with Rhonda Haines to refine the job description and he will then send it back to the Distance Learning Committee for one more look. It will then go to Human Resources to have the job posted.

Dr. Durgin's preference for search committees is that they be quite small (less than 7 members, prefers 5 members). He stated that he will include representation from the Distance Learning Committee on the search committee.

He also discussed another legal issue regarding the student use of resources that have academic licenses. These include journals and software. We need to have a process in place to make sure students accept the terms of use. He is discussing this with our attorney and with the Director of the Library.

Textbook/Supplemental Materials Issue

The Chair stated the issue is postponed to the next meeting since the Interim Deans are currently working on resolution of this problem.

Motion from the College of Arts and Sciences on the Email/Google Apps for Education Issue

The Committee reviewed a motion sent to it by the College of Arts and Sciences. The motion stated:

"The Faculty of the College of Arts and Sciences recommend that the institution adopt a two tier system keeping Gmail and adding Outlook as a secure system."

The motion had been unanimously approved by the College of Arts and Sciences.

Russ explained the concern was primarily for the loss of Google Apps for Education which is heavily used in the IDT programs and in any program where students are expected to collaborate on projects. The Faculty here have been using Google Apps for more than 5 years and it is also heavily used by other prestigious universities. Steve Schneider explained that Google Apps is an interactive learning system as opposed to Blackboard which is a course management system.

Ronny stated the motion from the College of Arts and Sciences contained incorrect language since both Gmail and Microsoft Exchange are secure systems. Jennifer stated that security has been given as the primary reason for switching from Gmail to Microsoft.

The Chair stated the email situation was a topic more appropriately discussed by the Technology Committee. Our motion should be directed at the distance learning issue.

The Committee unanimously approved the following motion:

The Distance Learning Committee supports the continued use of Google Apps for Education throughout the transition to Blackboard, and expresses its concern that the announced shift of the email platform for Faculty to Microsoft does not obviate the continued need to maintain Google Apps for Education, and is concerned that discontinuing support for Google Apps for Education will severely and negatively impact our ability to deliver education to our students, including distance learning students.

The Chair will present the motion to the Faculty Assembly Executive Committee for consideration at the next Faculty Assembly meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 1:55 pm.

Donna Silsbee, Chair

