

Faculty Working Group on Distance Education at Solano College

Final Report
May 15, 2006

INTRODUCTION

The Faculty Working Group on Distance Education formed during the Spring Semester 2006 to address concerns that had been raised about the current online program at Solano College. We brought together faculty representing the key constituent groups involved in Distance Education at Solano College in order to discuss the issues and develop policy proposals that would correct the problems that had been identified. Our goal was to put the online program on a firmer organizational and pedagogical foundation in preparation for future growth.

The members of the Faculty Working Group are:

Gail Kropp, Michael Wyly, Thomas Watkins (Academic Senate)
Marylou Fracisco, Ann Willer, Rennee Moore (Online Committee)
Sandra Rotenberg (Online Committee; Library)
Mary Gumlia (Online Committee; Counseling)
Erin Farmer (Curriculum Committee)
Diane White, Leslie Rota (CTA)
Dale Crandall-Bear (facilitator)

The Working Group met regularly through April and into May, 2006, and succeeded in drafting policy proposals that we believe address the major concerns that had been voiced regarding the online program. These proposals are now being transmitted to the Board of Governors and the Administration via this report. We anticipate the next phase of this process will involve meetings between faculty representatives from the Working Group and the Administration to achieve agreement on the final form and the implementation of these proposals.

The proposals contained in this report have also been reviewed by the Academic Senate, the Online Committee and the CTA Executive Board.

The policy proposals are presented in the following sequence:

1. Compliance with Title 5

- Instructor Contact
- Separate Approval for Online Courses
- Faculty Hiring Policy for Online Instruction

2. Creation of a Permanent Distance Education Committee

3. Training of Faculty for Online Instruction

4. The Role of Departments and Divisions in Distance Education

5. Library Services and Distance Education

6. Student Services and Distance Education

- Student Services
- Counseling

7. Issues Relating to the Collective Bargaining Agreement

- Workload
- Class Assignments
- Class Size

POLICY PROPOSALS

1. Compliance with Title 5

Instructor Contact (Section 55211)

Title 5 mandates that the instructor of record have mechanisms in place that provide for regular, effective, instructor-initiated contact. The Working Group has developed a form to be used by the Curriculum Committee to document the methods employed for instructor contact in each of our online courses. (see Appendix #1.)

This documentation will be used for all new online course approvals beginning with paper versions of the addendum forms in Fall 2006 semester, followed by electronic versions of the addendum forms in the Spring 2007 semester. Use of this form with existing online courses will begin when these existing courses are reviewed during the regular 5-year curriculum review process for each Division.

Separate Course Approval (Section 55213)

The Working Group concurred with the Academic Senate Position Paper on Distance Education, which stated, "Title 5 requires a separate approval process for courses taught as distant education. In making use of existing local curriculum approval process, there must be documentation of "regular effective contact" as described in 55211. For this reason, a course/section or session must be separately reviewed the first time it is offered in a technology mediated mode, and subsequently reviewed again when the technology changes sufficiently to alter the answers to how regular effective contact is achieved."

The Working Group has developed an addendum form to be used to meet this requirement (see Appendix #2). This addendum form will be used in paper form for all new online course approvals beginning with the Fall 2006 semester, with electronic

versions of the forms in use by Spring 2007 semester. Use of this addendum form with existing online courses will begin when these existing courses are reviewed during the regular 5-year curriculum review process for each Division.

An online course must be re-approved by the Curriculum Committee using the process outlined above if there are significant changes in the technical mode of delivery, or if there is a change of course delivery platform.

Faculty Selection (Section 55215)

The Working Group agreed to adopt the language on faculty hiring in relation to online classes from the Senate Position Paper, as follows:

1. Online faculty will be limited to individuals who are already faculty members in that department and have gone through the same hiring procedures as other faculty members (application, interview, and significant teaching demonstration). Recruitment from outside the department should not occur as it endangers the integrity of existing division/departmental, faculty-generated and maintained program goals, processes, and requirements.
2. Recruitment of adjunct faculty for teaching online courses should be done by directly and significantly consulting the department and division first. The department or division would then approach its own adjunct faculty first, before going outside the campus community.

For the reasons stated in point #2 above, the Working Group also agreed that the emergency hiring procedure cannot be used for staffing online courses.

2. Creation of a Permanent Distance Education Committee

The Working Group agreed that the operating structure of the current Online Committee is no longer appropriate for our expanding distance education program. To take its place, we have developed the following proposal for a permanent Distance Education Committee.

SOLANO COMMUNITY COLLEGE COMMITTEE ON DISTANCE EDUCATION

1. Committee Policy

The Committee on Distance Education will be a permanent standing committee of the Academic Senate which will deal with campus-wide instructional technology issues with special focus on pedagogical and curricular issues. The functions of the Committee will be:

1. To consider issues surrounding existing and emerging technologies and the implications for teaching and learning and to regularly update and advise the Senate on these matters.
2. To design and conduct training of online instructors.
3. To participate in the selection and on-going evaluation of current and future course management platforms.
4. To present recommendations, through the Academic Senate, to the Governing Board regarding the distance education program, pedagogy and instructional technology.
5. To support the campus community by serving as the resource for the development of distance learning modes of instruction.
6. To sponsor informational meetings, discussions, and workshops pertaining to distance learning modes of instruction and pedagogy by providing timely information to the campus and community.
7. To develop three year plans for the distance education program.
8. To make recommendations to the Faculty Association about distance education issues that impact working conditions or the collective bargaining agreement.
9. To develop standards and minimum requirements for all online classes.

2. Committee Membership

Voting members will be elected from the following areas: Business/CIS, Career/Technical, Fine and Applied Arts, Health Occupations, Humanities, Math/Science, Physical Education, Library, and Counseling (elected by faculty), two Division Deans (elected by Deans).

Appointed voting members: Online Faculty Coordinator; two student representatives, one academic and one vocational (appointed by ASSC).

Non voting members: CTA representative, Webmaster, VP of Academic Affairs, VP of Technology and Learning Resources, and Student Services.

Mechanism for selection of the chair of the committee: committee will elect its own chair for a 2-year term; the chair must be faculty.

Terms: faculty and division dean representatives shall serve 2 year terms with half the representatives elected each year. Student representatives shall serve for one year.

The Chair of the Distance Education Committee serves on the Academic Senate as an *ex officio* member (non-voting).

3. Training of Faculty for Online Instruction

A clear, equitable and practical training process is needed for instructors teaching in our online program. This process will ensure that all of the online instructors have the same skill set and familiarity with the distance education teaching and learning environment.

We have developed a step-by-step procedure for this training, which is detailed in Appendix #3.

4. The Role of Departments and Divisions in Distance Education

Division and Department faculty should have clear and significant input into the development of new and revised online courses. This input pathway would be no different than the development of other courses where an individual faculty member writes up a new course proposal and has the department faculty review that proposal, offer constructive and substantive critical review, and then sign in favor of the new proposal.

5. Library Services and Distance Education

Accreditation standards stress the need for librarian and library support of instructional programs in Standard II C.1:

“The institution supports the quality of its instructional programs by providing library and other learning support services that are sufficient in quantity, currency, depth, and variety to facilitate educational offerings, regardless of location or means of delivery.”

In response to the Solano College Self Study and the report of the WASC Accreditation Visiting Team, the Accrediting Commission recommended "In order to have Library holdings and services sufficient in scope and currency to support its curriculum, and be able to extend its services to the off-campus centers in Vallejo and Vacaville, the College will have to address the Library's funding level and, at a minimum, be responsive to the recommendations of the October 1993 and 1999 accreditation teams." However, extending the same level of professional library services to both the centers and our distance students is an additional burden for an already understaffed library. At a minimum these are the services which must be provided by professional librarians for Solano Community College distance learners as soon as possible:

- Maintain and expand electronic databases and e-book collections so that our distance learners have access to all of the resources necessary for success in their academic endeavors and at least minimally the same as those available to students attending traditional classes on campus. These databases and collections are currently funded by TTIP; this funding needs to be guaranteed in the event TTIP disappears.
- Maintain and expand membership in online chat reference service consortia.
- Maintain and expand personalized library services within distance courses.

- Maintain and expand reference services by email.
- Maintain and expand accessibility and efficiency of library website.
- Create a method for distance education students to get library cards without physically being in the library.
- Expand document delivery and ILL services to enable home delivery to distance education students.
- Increase Information Competency instruction for distance education students.
- Maintain relationship with other libraries to facilitate delivery of traditional library materials to all students.

The Academic Senate for the California Community Colleges defines library workshops as a method of acceptable “regular effective contact” in their Guidelines for Good Practice: Effective Instructor-Student Contact in Distance Learning.

The ASSCJC of WASC in their Distance Learning Manual adopted in 2005 state that “Availability and use of appropriate, equivalent, (and sometimes personalized) learning resources are essentials of a supportive and successful distance learning program. Although many of today’s institutional libraries are technologically capable of supporting learners at a distance, orientation and training are important components of effective student use of all resources for learning. Special funding may be necessary.”

Library services are of critical importance to all Solano Community College students, whether they take courses at the Fairfield campus, one of the centers, or online.

6. Student Services and Distance Education

Student Services

Maintain and expand online access to student services for distance learners.

Counseling

The Counseling Division has implemented the following action steps with respect to online services.

Beginning in fall 2001, the Division offered its first online course. Since then, three online counseling courses have been developed and offered on a regular basis during the fall, spring and summer sessions. These online courses include:

- Counseling 55, Valuing Diversity;
- Counseling 7, College Study Techniques; and
- Counseling 83, Applied Psychology

In spring 2003, an online student orientation was activated after several years of preparation. The Virtual Information Program (VIP) was created for current and

prospective students and also serves as a resource for counselors and other faculty. The online student orientation is available via the college website home page and Counseling Division link.

In addition, the Counseling Division has recognized the need to extend its counseling services to include e-counseling, commonly known as online counseling. Beginning in 2004, counselors formed a committee and began extensive research to study online counseling services offered by California community colleges. The committee evaluated its findings and recommended a pilot project, consisting of delivery of general information (not including social security or ID numbers). In spring 2006, with full Counseling Division support, the committee developed a complete e-counseling link to the division website. Activation of the e-counseling pilot project will begin soon, followed by an evaluation of the pilot project with recommendations to the Division regarding possible next steps in service delivery.

Additional next steps may include coordination with the new college integrated database system and creation of or joining a consortium of online counseling programs with Region 2 community colleges.

7. Issues Relating to the Collective Bargaining Agreement

The following are concepts that would serve as a basis for negotiation discussions between the Solano College Faculty Association (SCFA) and the District. The Distance Education Working Group will present these concepts to the Executive Board of the SCFA for review with the Association's members and its negotiating team. Upon Executive Board approval, the Association's negotiating team will meet and discuss these items with the District's representatives.

WORKLOAD

1. Maximum Instructor Workload

The DE Working Group suggests that the total workload for full-time instructors not exceed 160% in any given semester. This workload maximum would apply to all full-time faculty teaching at SCC and includes all classroom-based and online instruction.

2. Workload Distribution: Classroom-based/Online.

The DE Working Group recommends that the traditional, classroom-based instruction comprise a minimum of 40% of a fulltime instructor's regular load in any given academic year. Up to 60% of a full-time instructor's annual regular load may consist of fully online courses or the online portion of hybrid courses. However, as some divisions and programs might be adversely affected by cancellations or because of low enrollment in face-to-face courses, we would consider the need for exceptions to this guideline in those cases.

CLASS ASSIGNMENTS

The DE Working Group recommends the following:

1. All online class assignments will be voluntary.
2. Whenever an online course is offered, if possible, the traditional, or face to face, classroom course shall also be offered.
3. All assignments to online courses must be approved by the department and the division dean.
4. Online courses will count as part of an instructor's regular load. They will be given the same activity point credits as those for face-to-face courses as established in Article 19 of the collective bargaining agreement.
5. The developer of an online course will have the first right of refusal in teaching that course.
6. Full time faculty will have first rights of refusal for teaching online courses (already in Article 19, but may need reiteration).
7. Original online course content created by an instructor is the exclusive intellectual property of that instructor (see article on Intellectual Property). Online course content may be shared with instructors other than the original authoring instructor only with the express written permission of the original authoring instructor.
8. An online version of an existing face-to-face course will be considered a separate prep.

CLASS SIZE

The class size limit for an online course shall be the same as that for traditional, face to face, courses, as set forth in by the provisions of Article 19.4 of the collective bargaining agreement.

Appendices

1. Addendum Form for Documenting Instructor Contact
2. Addendum Form for Separate Course Approval for Online Courses
3. Training Process for Online Instructors

Appendix 1

Documentation of Instructor Contact

How do you propose to establish and maintain regular and effective contact with students as required by Title 5, Section 55211?

Specifically mark the following types of contact that you will use and indicate how you will measure the contact.

Contact	Y/N	How will you measure the contact?
Group meetings		
Individual meetings		
Orientation session		
Review session		
Supplemental seminar		
Library workshops		
Telephone contact		
Correspondence		
Voice mail		
Field trips		
Email		
Instant messaging		
Threaded discussions		
Chat rooms		
Course announcements		
Pod casting		
Web cams		
Blogs		
Video conferencing		
Teleconferencing		
Other		

Appendix 2

Addendum Form for Approval of Online Courses

Addendum Originator:		Planned Implementation Date:	
Dept:		Course Number:	
Course Title:			

← Please place an X in one of the gray boxes. →

Hybrid	Fully Online
The course has online components and face to face meetings	The course has no required face to face meetings.
Please describe how this hybrid class will meet face-to-face in the box below:	<u>Full Online Delivery Requirements:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students must be notified via the college schedule of classes and the syllabus for the class, if proctored tests are required for this course. • Any planned face-to-face meetings, such as an orientation or study session, must be optional. • The Curriculum Committee requires the use of asynchronous discussion as a component of every fully online course. • Accommodations regarding disabled student accessibility to online content must be made as prescribed in the Distance Education Guidelines regarding Section 508, as published by the California Community College Chancellor’s office.

Course Outline: The two methods that significantly change when teaching a course online are methods of instruction and methods of evaluation. Please describe how these methods will be adapted for online instruction.

Methods of Instruction: Copy your Methods of Instruction from the course outline into the space below. Specify any adaptations in instructional methodology resulting from offering this course in the distance learning mode you have selected (online or hybrid), as opposed to the face-to-face mode assumed by the current course outline.

Examples of online methods of instruction: Threaded discussions; instructor developed web lectures; converted power point presentations; digital video clips; graphics (digital charts, diagrams, photos, images, annotated screen shots); digital animations; web quests; online reference resources; chat; email; CD/DVD support materials; instructor web site; online library resources; text book supplements.

Methods of Instruction	Online Adaptation
<i>Example: Lecture and Discussion will be used to analyze and synthesize major trends in twentieth century history.</i>	<i>Example: Lecture will be accomplished using instructor prepared web based lectures and links to appropriate reference sites and historical web sites. Discussions will take place using the course management system discussion board in both group and whole class setting</i>

Methods of Evaluation: Copy your methods of evaluation from the course outline into the space below and describe how the evaluation methods in the course outline will be adapted for use in the online environment.

Examples of online methods of evaluation: Essays and research papers submitted to the course website; Open-book essay and short answer exam questions; timed quizzes and tests; Projects submitted via attachments in the CMS discussion forum; Online discussion participation (pairs, groups, whole class); proctored exams.

Methods of Evaluation	Online Adaptation
<p><i>Example:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>Research projects in specified topics will be completed.</i> 2. <i>Exams evaluating the students' comprehension of the effects of technology on politics will be given.</i> 	<p><i>Example:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>Students will use the college online library and specified web site references to complete a research project that will be submitted to the instructor via email attachment.</i> 2. <i>Proctored exams that can happen either at the college learning center or at the location agreed upon by the student and the instructor will take place twice in a semester.</i>

Sample Assignment: Please give an example of an assignment that students will do in the online class format described in this document:

Training Process for Online Teaching

A clear, equitable and practical training process is needed for instructors teaching in our Online program. This process will ensure that all of the online instructors have the same skill set and familiarity with the distance education teaching and learning environment.

Instructors who are already teaching online would use one or more of their existing online course shells to complete the training. Instructors new to online teaching would develop a new course shell as they proceed through the training process.

This training process will be coordinated by the Distance Education Committee, a new permanent standing committee of the Academic Senate.

Step 1: Departmental and Division Discussions

All initiatives in online instruction should begin with discussions among the faculty member's departmental colleagues and Division Dean. Once a general agreement is achieved on at least the possibility of teaching a particular course online, the instructor can proceed to the next step.

Step 2: Completion of ecollege Training Course (recommended)

It is highly recommended that instructors new to online enroll in and complete the introductory course provided by ecollege, "Developing Online Courses." (Course tuition fee is covered by the existing ecollege contract.)

Step 3: Assignment of a Course Shell and Mentor

Each new prospective online instructor will be assigned a developmental course shell, which will be housed in the "Future Development" section of the ecollege server. This course shell will be used to complete the skill exercises outlined in Steps 4 and 5 below. Each prospective instructor will also choose a mentor instructor to assist them in the training process. Veteran online instructors would use their existing course shells for the training process. Veteran online instructors may choose to work with a mentor if they wish.

Step 4: Achievement of Technical Competency

The online instructor will achieve competency in the following technical aspects of online teaching:

- Email (reply, forward, cc, bcc, folders, attachments, file types, viruses)
- Web navigation skills (URLs, following links, new windows, history, bookmarks)

- Using Basic Course Tools (document sharing, gradebook, course announcements, threaded discussions, drop box, webliography, etc.)
- Developing a course syllabus
- Constructing a unit structure and course schedule
- Developing Content Items of the following types: text, discussion, exams
- Basic multimedia (images, video clips, PowerPoint)

The mentor will assist new online instructors in developing these skills. Experienced online instructors will develop and maintain competence in these skills which have been mastered and are a part of their existing course. Flex-cal workshops covering these skills will also be offered.

Step 5: Achievement of Pedagogical Competency

The online instructor will achieve competency in the following pedagogical aspects of online teaching:

- Creating an interactive online learning environment
- Constructing effective online discussions
- Incorporating different learning styles
- Constructing effective examinations and other assessment tools
- Achieving a clear, understandable navigation structure
- Awareness of ADA issues. Ability to use accessibility evaluation tools and to make modifications to the web site as needed.
- Inclusion of regular effective instructor-initiated student contact (course announcements, email communication, grading comments, virtual office hours, video conferencing, etc.)

The mentor will assist new online instructors in developing these skills. Experienced online instructors will develop and maintain competence in these skills which have been mastered and are a part of their existing course. Flex-cal workshops covering these skills will also be offered.

Step 6: Completion of the Training Process

A checklist of the skills listed in steps 4 and 5 will be developed to assist the instructor in accounting for the skills that have been mastered. When all of the skills have been mastered, the instructor will complete the checklist in consultation with the mentor and then submit it to the Distance Education Committee. The Distance Education Committee will maintain a list of the instructors who have completed the training.

Step 7: Class Assignments

The Distance Education Committee will periodically submit to the Academic Senate an updated list of the instructors in each division who have successfully completed the training process. The Academic Senate will transmit this list to the Division Deans with a

recommendation that only instructors who have completed the training process be assigned to teach online and hybrid classes at Solano College.

Implementation Timeline

Beginning with the fall semester, 2006, instructors developing their first online course would complete the training process before their class is taught for the first time.

Veteran online instructors would be given a one-year period in which to complete their training. They can continue to teach online during the 2006-2007 academic year while completing the training.

The first list of trained online instructors would be published by the Distance Education Committee in May, 2007.

Future Changes to the Training Process

Periodically, the Distance Education Committee will review the online training process for completeness, appropriateness and compatibility with the ever-changing technology. Updates and revisions will be made as needed.

Support for this Training Process

In order to implement this process for the entire campus, the following support from the College is needed:

1. Developmental course shells available to prospective online instructors.
2. A comprehensive Training Study Guide to be created by the Distance Education Committee.
3. Initial training of experienced online faculty willing to act as mentors for other faculty. The mentor instructors are expected to demonstrate the same level of competency as is expected from faculty undergoing certification.
4. Support for the mentor instructors.

Related Issues

Two processes are not addressed by this document:

1. The approval and evaluation of online courses

This task should be addressed in the regularly approved process for periodic departmental review of all courses and curricula.

2. The evaluation of faculty teaching online.

This should be addressed in the established process for periodic evaluation of faculty (currently in negotiation).