

MIDTERM REPORT PLANNING AGENDA 1 DRAFT AUGUST 7, 2014

(Items 1-8)

Distance Education

The College will address the needs of its Distance Education (DE) program and students by enhancing the following: access, equity of student services, comparative data analysis with traditional courses, and the resources to be effective. (SCC Strategic Goals 1: Foster Excellence in Learning and 2: Maximize Student Access and Success)

- 1. The College will use relevant Student Opinion Survey results as a basis for discussions and improvement in DE. (Standard I.B.1; Responsibility—Director of Research and Planning, DE Coordinator)**

The Distance Education Committee administered a Student Opinion Survey in Fall 2012. The survey covered a wide range of issues, including student satisfaction with their online course, communication with the instructor, support services. The results were tabulated, shared with the faculty and discussed by the DE Committee. [\[E1.1:1 DE Student Opinion Survey, 11-20-12\]](#). Several major initiatives were developed to address the issues raised in the survey results (see item #2 below).

Our next student survey will be conducted during the Fall 2014 semester. [\[evidence here\]](#)

- 2. The College will work collaboratively to negotiate terminology and follow through on creating, implementing, and enforcing DE guidelines. (Standard I.B.2; Responsibility—DE Committee, Curriculum Committee, Academic Senate, deans, and EVPASA)**

The DE Committee undertook a major re-organization of Distance Education at Solano College from 2012 through 2013. The changes address a wide variety of issues raised by our faculty and students, as well as the Accreditation Commission and the Chancellor's Office. In summary, the new policies include:

- Required listing of course SLOs in online syllabi. The mechanisms for ensuring that Distance Education courses are using and assessing Student Learning Outcomes are currently the same as those for face-to-face courses. All courses, online and face-to-face, have SLOs.

- Student Success Workshops & Orientations. Face-to-face orientation and success workshops for students in online classes are now being offered at the beginning of every semester. These workshops include information on how to succeed in online courses, e.g., Time Management, Communicating with Your DE Instructor, Taking Tests Online, and Introduction to the Canvas Learning Management System. These DE workshops are part of the Student Success Workshops series sponsored by the Academic Success Center.
- Annual Analysis of Comparative Data on Online and face-to-face classes (see item #8 below).
- Faculty Training. All faculty planning to teach online courses at SCC must now undergo training in online teaching. The training focuses on tools and techniques for maximizing student success in online classes, including compliance with ACCJC and Title 5 standards. [[E6.12 Academic Senate Minutes Apr. 15, 2013 discussion of Faculty Training & Certification Proposal](#)] [[E6:13 Online Faculty Training & Certification](#)] [[E6.14 Outline of Canvas Training Workshops](#)] [[E6.15 Training Process Graphic](#)]
- Course Shell Review & Approval. SCC is now requiring all online courses to undergo a “Course Shell Review” to insure compliance with ACCJC and Title 5 standards. The online course shell contains all of the content for the online course, including the course syllabus, course assignments, and course assessments. The College administration has directed that no online section will be added to the class schedule until it has completed the Course Shell Review. Course shell reviews are now being completed for Spring 2014 online classes taught in the new Canvas LMS. [[E6.16 Academic Senate Minutes April 29, 2013 Approval of Online Course Shell Review Proposal](#)] [[E6.17 Course Shell Review Policy](#)] [[E6.18 Course Shell Review Form](#)]
- Course Orientations. We are now requiring all online instructors to provide an orientation for their online students, either a face-to-face in-person orientation, or an online equivalent. This orientation component is covered in the Course Shell Review process.

Additional details pertaining to these policies are available in our response to Recommendation #6 in the 2013 Accreditation Report.

3. The College will create outcomes for the DE Program (Standard II.A.1.c; Responsibility—DE Committee, Outcomes Assessment Coordinator)

In our 2011 Self-Study Report, we stated the following:

The Distance Education (DE) Committee is considering whether or not DE should be considered a program in and of itself, in which case it would need program outcomes; this is still in discussion.

In discussions since then, the DE Committee has determined that our Distance Education offerings do not constitute a program, since a student does not receive a degree of any kind in Distance Education. Online classes are a modality of instructional delivery, not a program. Consequently, program outcomes are not appropriate for Distance Education. The quality of the online course offerings are determined by the policies outlined in items #2 above.

- 4. The College will consider the following catalog issues: the catalog does not address instructional delivery applied in DE courses, programs and degree offerings. The catalog does not address the interaction between DE faculty and students, nor the accessibility of DE faculty and staff to students. (Standard II.A.2 and Standard II.B.2.d; Responsibility—DE Committee, EVPASA)**

The Distance Education Committee will review the Catalog language for Distance Education in Fall 2014 [\[evidence goes here\]](#). They will make changes to Catalog language where appropriate.

- 5. The College will consider adding a DE clause to the academic freedom policy (Standard II.A.2 and Standard II.B.2.d; Responsibility—Academic Senate)**

In our 2011 Self-Study Report, we stated the following:

Academic Freedom Statement:
Faculty and student academic freedom policies are clearly stated on page 10 and 14 of the College Catalog. There is no separate policy for DE students or faculty. (p. 190)

The Distance Education Committee does not believe there is any need to alter this policy.

6. The College will continue to develop department/school-level policies regarding online courses. (Standard II.A.2.c; Responsibility—School deans and faculty)

After further discussion, the DE Committee has determined that this Planning Agenda item is no longer necessary. Instead, the Committee underwent a campus-wide re-organization of DE policies and procedures (see item #2 above). We determined that campus-wide policies would be more consistent than a variety of department or school-level policies.

Individual departments or schools can still develop their own policies in addition to the campus-wide policies. For example, the Department of Mathematics has decided that all examinations in the online math classes shall be in-person proctored exams.

7. The College will encapsulate all DE information and complete DE Program Review. (Standard II.A.6.c; Responsibility—DE Committee, Director of Research and Planning, school deans and faculty)

A **comprehensive** DE Program Review will be done after all departments who offer DE courses have completed their Program Reviews. The DE Program Review will encapsulate all of the findings in the Department Program reviews, in addition to addressing broader issues relating to DE. **When is expected timeline?**

8. The College will begin purposely disaggregating data for DE instruction, including data on complaints/grievances. (Standard II.B.2.d; Responsibility—Director of Research and Planning)

The College completed a study of disaggregated data for online and face-to-face classes in 2013. Data was covered pertaining to the previous three academic years (2010-2012). This comparative data will be studied on an annual basis from now on.

Summary of the 2010-1012 data:

Enrollment data at 1st Census (approx. 2 weeks after the start of semester) shows a 10% differential in fill rate between face-to-face and online enrollments (FF=92% / OL=83.6 %). Since the online enrollments are generally as high or higher than face-to-face on the first day of class, these data indicate significant drop rates in online classes during the first two weeks of the semester. As noted earlier, the Distance Education Committee identified multiple reasons for this higher drop rate, including lack of student preparedness for online learning, technology barriers, student failure to read and follow directions, and lack of instructor contact in the crucial first days of the semester. They contend that a segment of our students enter online classes

with the mistaken impression that online class will be easier, then drop when they discover the contrary.

The retention data revealed a 6-8% lower rate of end of semester retention in online classes relative to face-to-face classes. This figure has been very consistent for the last ten years and the Committee has not arrived at a decisive reason for this disparity.

Success rate data (students achieving a passing grade at the end of a course) indicates that students who persist in online classes do as well or better than students in face-to-face classes. (GPA rates: FF=2.29 / OL=2.41) This may be because the higher drop rates in online classes leave a cohort of online students that are the better performers. [E1.8:1 Comparable data, OL/FF, from the DE Program Review]

DE Committee planned actions based on the evaluation of the DE data
The Distance Education Committee devoted its Sept 9, 2013 meeting to a discussion of measures to address the higher drop rates in online classes. The DE Committee **developed** the following Action Plan for Spring 2014:

- Develop a more intense (and mandatory) orientation for students enrolling in online classes.
- Develop a survey to measure student preparedness for online learning (technical competency, time management, etc.) The survey will be developed and implemented for Spring 2014 classes prior to class registration.
- Continue to survey students at the end of the semester to assess satisfaction with online courses.
- Post course syllabi to the SCC Web prior to student registration to illustrate the comparable difficulty of online courses to face-to-face courses.
- Develop a common program for all online courses for the first 3 days of class. Students would be required to log into the class on day 1 or 2 and must participate in an activity by the end of the third day, or they will be dropped. This program is to bring the online classes more in line with what happens in face-to-face classes (no-show attendance).
- Develop a welcome email message that will be sent to all online students a few days before class begins that clearly explains login procedures and instructor expectations and guidelines for student participation.

UPDATE WITH FALL EVIDENCE, E.G., FLEX CAL TRAINING.

CONCLUSION