

Distance Learning Subcommittee Report, Spring 2003

University Curriculum Committee

Distance Learning Subcommittee Members 2002-2003

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Purpose of Subcommittee

As noted in the minutes once a formal definition of “distance learning” was updated, the subcommittee was authorized to investigate how campuses throughout the CSU had addressed the concerns raised over the past decade regarding distance learning at HSU. Members of the subcommittee contacted Distance learning coordinators and directors at Chico, Dominguez Hills, San Jose, SLO, Sacramento, and San Diego.

Introduction

Over the past decade a number of key policy issues have been identified as barriers to the sustained development and delivery of distance education courses at HSU. The Distance Learning Subcommittee of the UCC analyzed these issues and generated 22 questions that were incorporated into a survey instrument (Appendix A). Nine CSU campuses were identified as offering a significant number of courses in distance-learning formats. The list was restricted to the CSU because policy options to be considered at HSU need to reflect the unique opportunities and constraints inherent in the system. The survey required 45 to 60 minutes to complete by telephone. Ultimately, the subcommittee was able to collect data from six of the nine campuses. What follows is a set of recommendations based on our analysis of the data.

Policy Recommendations in Brief

Policy recommendations related to the management of university resources:

- Prioritize resources for the development of asynchronous web-based courses as the most cost effective form of DL.
- CSIT committee should develop guidelines for prioritizing the use of personnel and facilities, including specific criteria for evaluating DL course development proposals.
- If significant University resources are to be used an initial step in the development process should include the CDC providing a consulting and documenting service to help faculty organize the project and identify a range of university resources that could facilitate the faculty member’s design.
- Use existing class size policies to govern DL courses and encourage departments to establish specific standards that govern the hiring of teaching assistants based on class size.

Policy recommendations to encourage development of new DL courses:

- Develop a variety of innovative solutions to reward departments for participating in DL.
- Release time of up to three units of credit should be used to encourage DL course development. The amount of release time should be negotiated during the proposal process with input from the CDC staff.
- Where non-matriculated students are served, DL planning groups should explore options available through the Extended Education Office for funding DL courses and compensating faculty/departments.

Policy recommendations to develop an equitable agreement for the university and faculty:

- When significant University resources are used to develop courses, the faculty member and the university would share ownership, and each would retain the right to use the material upon separation.
- Within the terms of various temporary/permanent and part-time/full-time teaching appointments governed by University policies—and teaching assignments made within departments—faculty members who use a significant amount of University resources would be required to teach the course twice at the request of the department chair. Agreement to do so would precede course development.
- While the faculty member who developed the course remains employed at HSU, that faculty member will have the “right of first refusal” to teach the course in any semester during which it is offered. If the faculty member chooses not to teach the course, the department would be free to have another faculty member teach the course that semester.
- To compensate for any significant increase in workload during the introductory year of DL course delivery, faculty should be given an additional unit of credit for each 3-unit course during the two periods they are obligated to teach the course.

Policy recommendations related to the process of proposing new DL courses:

- Require new DL course proposals to include a plan for minimizing the potential for cheating using one or more of the identified strategies.
- As part of the DL course development proposal process, instructors will identify a course evaluation plan. At the time of course evaluation, a faculty member with experience in the area of DL teaching and learning will augment the standard review by departmental faculty.
- Departments should be given the option of selecting either paper and pencil or on-line student course evaluations, and the resources to use whichever form they select.

Policy Recommendations with explanation:

Policy recommendations related to the management of university resources:

1. The major investment in Blackboard and similar technologies currently being used to augment traditional campus-based classes in the CSU, and the increasing familiarity among faculty with this form of technologically mediated instruction, suggests that the emerging infrastructure, technical support, and faculty expertise are likely to make asynchronous web-based courses the most cost-effective form of distance learning in the foreseeable future. An emphasis on these types of offerings also reflects the experience of our sister institutions where asynchronous courses represent the majority of distance learning opportunities. It is the recommendation of the subcommittee that asynchronous web-based courses be the main focus of our future efforts to develop new DL courses, while not excluding other forms where there are specific needs or opportunities that require synchronous web-based or television based classes.
2. The subcommittee is aware of concerns about how resources will be allocated for DL development and delivery. We recommend that the CSIT committee develop a policy for prioritizing the use of personnel and facilities in DL course development and a process for evaluating DL course development proposals.
3. Current budget constraints and pressure to increase FTES raise concerns about realistic class size, including the total number of students enrolled in DL courses. There are few unique class size policies for DL in the CSU. There is a general consensus that for most DL courses, enrollment caps of 25-50 are optimal for teaching and learning. In some cases faculty were rewarded with professional development funds for courses that had higher than average enrollments. Based on the experiences of other CSU campuses, the subcommittee recommends that existing class size policies be used to govern DL courses and that specific standards be established by departments for class sizes indicative of needs for teaching assistants.
4. When faculty are planning to develop a new course, and the need for technology support extends beyond the capacity of their own department, a centralized coordinating unit would facilitate efforts to manage technical and human resources campus-wide. As an initial step in the development of a new on-line course, the CDC would provide a consulting and documenting service to help faculty organize the project and identify a range of university resources that could facilitate the faculty member's design.

Policy recommendations to encourage development of new DL courses:

5. Three enrollment options were identified to support distance learning. The vast majority of DL students in the CSU are regularly matriculated students taking courses at their home institution. However, concurrent enrollment is not uncommon in areas where a number of CSU campuses are in close proximity. In the case of concurrent enrollment, the student fees go to the home institution while the FTES goes to the department offering the course. Currently HSU is participating in a Communicative Disorders program where students are co-enrolled at Fresno. Issues related to extended concurrent enrollment will need to be addressed given current policy.

When non-matriculated students enroll through Extended Education no FTES are generated for the academic department. None of the CSU campuses has found a solution to this particular issue. Based on the experiences of other institutions the subcommittee recommends that Extended Education (EE) develop financial agreements when they are in the best interests of both the department and EE. Under some circumstances, EE provides money back to departments that offer DL courses. Small departments with a history of high enrollment also can create hybrid classes where a negotiated number of seats are reserved for Extended Education students. In this way, the regularly matriculated students generate FTES while a financial incentive for DL course development is provided to the department in the form of registration fees shared by Extended Education. The subcommittee recommends that a variety of innovative solutions (e.g., hybrid courses open to both matriculated and extended education students) be developed to meet the needs of specific programs and learning communities. When such innovative solutions are possible, they can be mutually beneficial to all parties.

6. Encouraging faculty participation in developing DL courses continues to be a problem at many institutions. A variety of compensation schemes emerged from the data. Stipends from \$500 to \$1500 were used with varying degrees of success in encouraging faculty to develop new DL courses. In several cases the stipends failed to have any discernible effect on faculty participation. The subcommittee believes that providing release time for faculty to develop courses is more likely than stipends to be effective at facilitating DL course development at HSU. The subcommittee recommends that release time be negotiated during the proposal process. Technologists in the Courseware Development Center and elsewhere on campus can provide advice to both departments and faculty about the likely time requirements for creating proposed courses. Experience will determine if a standard can be established that provides guidelines to aid the departments and faculty in negotiating appropriate release time.
7. FTES are allocated in the traditional manner for all the CSU campuses contacted; only matriculated students and concurrently enrolled students generate FTES for the programs offering DL courses. The subcommittee recommends that DL planning groups accept this limitation and explore a variety of alternative options

for funding DL courses and compensating faculty/departments for their efforts. For instance, funding to develop courses and support ongoing technical support as needed could be developed through Extended Education contributions or student fees where appropriate.

Policy recommendations to develop an equitable agreement for the university and faculty:

8. The issue of intellectual property currently is being addressed at the system level. Two separate issues emerged from the data. The first involves ownership of course material and rights to royalties generated by DL courses. Here the subcommittee feels that the 50/50 ownership model practiced by several campuses is the most equitable. In these models both the University and the faculty member share equally in profits generated by the sale of co-owned course materials. Upon separation both are entitled to continue using the materials. The subcommittee also recommends that CSIT should develop a rubric for determining at what level of commitment of university resources this form of agreement becomes appropriate.

The second issue relates to the rights and responsibilities of the university and faculty members in using the DL courses while the faculty member is employed at HSU. Here the subcommittee recommends that:

- Faculty members who use a significant amount of university resources for DL course development would be required to teach the course at least twice at the request of the department chair. This agreement will be made before the course is developed.
 - While the faculty member is still employed at HSU, that faculty member would retain the “right of first refusal” when the course is being offered. If the faculty member chooses not to teach the course in a given semester, the department would be free to offer the course using another faculty member for that semester.
9. Given that DL is a significantly different pedagogy than the face-to-face instruction more familiar to faculty, peer evaluation of DL courses raises the issue of who has the expertise to evaluate the pedagogical implications of DL course delivery. A variety of rubrics are available for evaluating DL courses. The subcommittee recommends that as part of the proposal process, DL course developers provide guidelines or rubrics for course evaluation. At the time of course evaluation a faculty member with experience in the area of DL teaching and learning would augment the standard review by departmental faculty. The DL course evaluations should include an application of the selected guidelines/rubric at least until a cadre of experienced faculty emerge who can observe and evaluate DL courses in ways comparable to evaluations of face-to-face courses. Incumbent in this process is the requirement that faculty make substantial

observations possible by providing their colleagues appropriate levels of access to their courses for purposes of evaluation.

10. There is a general belief that, at least during the early stages, DL courses increase faculty workload significantly over face-to-face instruction. Therefore, the DL subcommittee recommends that faculty be given an additional unit of credit for each 3-unit course for the first two semesters the course is being offered. This covers the period during which the faculty member is obligated to teach the course. At the end of that period, the faculty member has the right of first refusal, protecting his/her rights to use proprietary work, but is no longer obligated to teach the course. Thus, if teaching the DL course results in too high a workload to continue without the added unit, the faculty member can quit teaching the class.

Policy recommendations related to the process of proposing new DL courses:

11. In order to address the potential for cheating on exams in DL courses, many instructors have shifted assessments to projects/papers; others require students to come to campus to take exams. All of the universities contacted rely on existing policies regarding cheating and make a particular effort to communicate those policies to DL students. The subcommittee recommends that when faculty propose new DL courses, they specifically address the issue of minimizing the potential for cheating.
12. Many of the campuses use the standard paper and pencil forms of student evaluations common to in-class courses. At these institutions the forms are mailed. However, on-line evaluations also are being used, and several informants suggested that on-line evaluations are likely to become increasingly prevalent. As a result, and with continued concerns about the lack of evidence regarding the comparability of on-line and paper and pencil formats, the subcommittee recommends that departments be given the option of selecting a mode of course evaluations and the resources to use whichever form they select.

Additional considerations:

One of the key unresolved questions is: Given limited resources, which of the following options should guide development?

- Serving existing students by providing more flexible course scheduling and optimizing use of limited facilities by increasing DL course offerings;
- or
- Serving populations who cannot attend classes on campus.

These options have significant implications for many of the issues addressed above. For instance, if the goal is to serve distant populations, a more programmatic approach is essential. In that case, resources should be devoted to those opportunities that promise a comprehensive program rather than an ad hoc collection of courses.

Appendix A: Survey instrument

1. Types of offerings/ how many
 - Correspondence courses
 - One-way transmission on radio/TV
 - One way transmission with call in
 - Two way video
 - Internet based instruction
 - Synchronous
 - Non-synchronous

2. Significant issues currently being negotiated?

3. Who are the students?

What are their educational objectives for taking distance-learning courses? (BS/BA, MS/MA or professional development)

- Part-time professional
- Full time, on/off campus
- Full time off campus
- Advanced high school students

4. Are your distance education students primarily from your campus? Other CSU campuses? Other?

5. What motivated the development of the current distance learning efforts on your campus?

How have you addressed the following concerns:

6. Limiting class size or getting help to manage large numbers of students
7. Offering courses outside of the traditional 16 week semester/ quarter
8. Preventing cheating
9. Ownership issues of intellectual property
10. Decisions about how to allocate DL resources.
11. Relationship building between on-campus and off-campus students
12. Peer evaluation of the teaching.
13. Student evaluation of the teaching

14. Compensation for additional faculty time to develop and conduct distance-learning courses.
15. How is FTE allocated for distance learning courses?
16. What about FTE for non-matriculated students?
17. What role does the technical staff play in developing and supporting distance learning courses?
18. How do faculty learn to develop effective courses for distance learning?
19. What infrastructure problems were encountered in offering distance learning courses (server failure, facilities development, connectivity, scheduling of facilities and resources)
20. What hardware/ software issues have arisen and how did you deal with them?
21. What have you done to facilitate students access to the technology?
22. How have you addressed computer security/ redundancy?