

FACULTY SENATE

TASKFORCE

ON

DISTANCE

EDUCATION

2014-15

WRIGHT STATE UNIVERSITY

Charge

Assess current distance education activities and infrastructure to determine current institutional strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities.

Between Summer 2013 and Fall 2014, 1,837 distinct courses were offered, of which 526 (or 28.6%) were offered as online (i.e., Web 1 or Web 2) courses. Student enrollment in online course sections has increased from 4,608 students in Fall 2013, to 6,357 students in Fall 2014, a 37.9% increase.



Figure 1 (Based on Summer 2013 - Fall 2014 Data)

37.9%

INCREASE IN STUDENT
ENROLLMENT IN ONLINE
COURSE SECTIONS FROM
FALL 2013, TO FALL 2014

Between Summer 2013 and Fall 2014, the success rate in undergraduate distance courses was 83% (81% in traditional courses); the success rate in graduate distance courses was 94% (96% in traditional courses). It is worth noting in this context, however, that according to the TDE faculty survey, the majority of distance courses (84%) had un-proctored assessments: exams were proctored in only 8% of distance courses, quizzes in 5%, and both exams and quizzes in 3% of such courses.

Undergraduate Success Rate



Graduate Success Rate



TDE Recommendation:

More needs to be done to determine whether the relative paucity of proctored assessments in distance courses can in part explain their success rate.

The Taskforce on Distance Education would have benefited from being able to consult with a unit responsible for coordinating all aspects of distance education at the University, including: terminology, policies and procedures, marketing and communications, faculty incentives, student success and accessibility, infrastructure, and the scholarship of teaching and learning as it pertains to distance education.

TDE Recommendation:

TDE recommends that the University, at a minimum, allocate additional resources to expand the roles and responsibilities of the Distance Education team within the Center for Teaching and Learning in order to have the capacity to coordinate the many facets of distance learning at the University.

Charge

Recommend university standards for terminology and designations of categories of distance education pedagogy and delivery modes.

TDE identified four sources of definitions currently in use at the University. The consistent use of terminology concerning distance courses and programs is critical for meeting compliance requirements, reporting to accreditors, and providing clear and effective consumer information.

TDE Recommendation:

TDE recommends that the University adopt a standard set of definitions for distance courses and programs.

Charge

Formulate distance learning objectives and market strategies including assessments of needs, potential audience, required investments and academic pedagogies.

The role of distance education initiatives at the University is not explicitly stated in its mission, vision, or values statements. Nor is it discussed in the Strategic Plan 2013-2018: Empower.

TDE Recommendation:

TDE recommends that the University make distance education initiatives part of its strategic plan and budget, and set specific goals for these initiatives, culminating in the production of a distance education and e-learning strategic plan for 2016-2021.

Charge

Recommend potential changes in policies and procedures regarding distance education strategies, delivery modes, and supporting infrastructure to the Faculty Senate.

Since many of the currently offered distance learning courses were originally approved to be offered face-to-face and on campus, the Course Addition, Modification, and Deletion Procedure, approved by Faculty Senate in March 2015, has significant curricular review process ramifications.

TDE Recommendation:

TDE recommends that the University Academic Policy Committee (UAPC) determine when and how departments and programs are to begin implementing this policy, and submit its recommendation to Faculty Senate for review.

Charge

Recommend incentives and support to encourage individual faculty to strategically participate in distance education.

TDE Recommendation:

In light of the scholarly consensus that the amount of work required to develop and teach online courses is substantially greater than the amount of work required to prepare and teach traditional courses, TDE recommends that the University continue to incentivize faculty participation in “Program,” Multi-section” and “Dual-mode” distance learning courses at current levels.

Charge

Recommend implementation strategies and incentives to encourage departments and colleges to reach new markets and improve student success through distance education.

Not all students enrolled in courses with a significant online component are prepared for (or even aware of) the technical requirements and proficiencies needed to succeed in them. The TDE faculty survey indicates strong faculty support for an online student orientation program.

TDE Recommendation:

TDE recommends that CTL work with faculty, students, and the Student Academic Success Center to create one or more online orientations to assess student readiness, simulate the online learning environment, and troubleshoot technical problems, and that such orientation(s) be incorporated into all introductory-level undergraduate courses, at the discretion of faculty teaching the courses.



TDE Recommendation:

At the request of the TDE, the Office of Disability Services has produced report on online accessibility suggesting that it is just a matter of time before a student with a disability files a complaint concerning the accessibility of Wright State distance courses with the Department of Justice.

TDE recommends that the University create a taskforce on online accessibility charged with proposing recommendations to ensure accessibility compliance.

Charge

Assess existing classroom infrastructure including furniture, fixtures, layouts and technology; and recommend infrastructure for a classroom(s) of the future to support active learning, distance learning and other novel pedagogical delivery methods.

TDE Recommendation:

To ensure that future classrooms are designed with the possibility of distance delivery in mind, TDE recommends including a CTL instructional designer/instructional technologist on current and future classroom modernization and maintenance committees.