DEC (Distance Education Committee)
Minutes: February 22, 2012
Next Meeting: March 7, 3-4:30, LC 53

Ali Klinger, Sandy Boyd, Kathleen Smyth, Sara Lefkowitz, John Marmysz, Sara McKinnon, Ira Lansing, Ken Meier

VP Ken Meier: guest to find out what's going on at meeting of DEC.
-Suggested faculty incentives to develop DE and promote quality; indicated that greater transparency needed for DE budget expenditures.

President of AS Sara McKinnon: guest to clarify role of DEC and respond to questions about budgetary oversight.

-Question to Sara McK: what is the role of DEC and can we oversee DE budget to ensure it gets used for training that faculty are demanding?
-Sara McK: DEC is a subcommittee of the AS, defining where DE fits in the major scheme of things.

-From Ken M: there should be more transparency when it comes to the DE budget. Also, DEC should play a greater role in vetting courses for quality, as was done at Ken’s prior institution.

-From Sara McK: consideration of faculty questionnaire to gather more information for planning future of DE at COM. DEC discussed and offered suggestions and revisions.

“We have a couple of vocal senators who expressed concern regarding student success and retention - which is a valid concern - as well as concern that it may not be appropriate for all disciplines. However, I count at least 10 senators who are quite open to the idea. And as I’ve said there needs to be a paper trail that documents that the faculty as a whole has been asked to weigh in - so that if people complain later, we can point to this. One senator teaches video courses - which have a tremendous attrition which may have colored his comments. And there have been stats made public recently that not all students were not doing so well in DE courses. I realize that the success rate is improving and this is by and large due to the wonderful work you all have done to provide best practices and guidance to faculty and more importantly to students via the welcome letters, etc.”
**DEC Comments and Discussion:**
- What will be done with the data we collect?
- Change “survey” to “questionnaire”
- Add question: If there were negotiated incentives for Distance Education course development, would you be interested in participating in a program to develop DE course(s)?
- Add info from the student questionnaire so faculty knows what was collected.
- Clarify hybrid for online for the questionnaire
- Use of budget for Moodle training.
- Can we access and how should we best utilize? DE is complicated; we need a continuing budget for training.
- Ken M. said he wants to work on that, by participating in DE committee.
- We need to plan quickly for training to happen prior to the end of the year.

**Discussion of WASC Recommendations 3 & 5:**

**Recommendation #3**
In order to meet standards, the team recommends that the college allocate resources to create a sustainable infrastructure to support a distance education program that can deliver high quality curricula and support student access and success. (II.A.1b; II.A.2.d; II.B.3.a; III.C.1)

**Recommendation #5**
In order to meet standards, the team recommends that the college remedy the lack of library services, learning resources and student support services for evening, Indian Valley Campus, and online students. (II.B.3.a; II.C.1.c, ER 1, ER 16)

- WASC is asking for a DE plan, according to Sara McK, but there are many plans already
- Need for dedicated staffing, office space, training, services, and course quality incentives
- DE serves close to 1000 students with close to 100 courses. Doing so with so little support and so few resources has taken its toll on the online faculty
- Online instruction also includes web-enhanced courses, and all have access to Moodle
- No Course Studio as of Fall 2012, so online training and instruction is ramping up at COM in Moodle
From Ira L: Recommendations for DE seem to go overboard; they do not apply to other modalities. Never done for other course deliveries. Supports quality for online, but bar seems to be set higher and/or differently for WASC when it comes to DE.

From John M: “At the last college I worked at, we had an actual office with a full-time secretary and a full-time coordinator who were in charge of communicating with students, training faculty and students and distributing information about distance education courses. I think we need this sort of centralization at COM. So I'll repeat my suggestion that there be an actual office of Distance Education that is consistently manned full-time on the COM campus.

If we are as far behind in the number of DE classes as your numbers suggest, then perhaps it is time to hire more instructors in all disciplines who are committed to teach online. At the very least, as was suggested in our last meeting, I think the suggestion that there be incentives to develop and teach online classes is important. BTW: this was also something that was in place at the last college I taught at. If we were developing a new course, we were paid an extra sum on top of our teaching hours.”

From Sara L: “I would like to add another aspect of Distance Education; we are preparing students to work in the 21st century. Computer and information literacy are essential skills for these students to master to succeed in today's world. Digitalized workplace trainings, online discussions, meetings, and conferences, are increasingly common. Online courses taken at the community college level help students develop these skills.

In nursing, the textbooks are considered outdated from the publication date; mastering the skill of identifying and utilizing peer reviewed web content is essential. The NCLEX RN, the licensing exam is delivered in a computerized format. The wide spread adoption of the Electronic Medical Record is mandated for implementation by 2014. One of the major reasons I use a hybrid course, is to help students develop the computer and information literacy skills that they will need to succeed in today's healthcare environment. The MOODLE platform is an excellent tool for this.”
From Maula A: “Distance Ed is not just about fully online classes. It is also about hybrids. It is about utilizing technology to provide much needed support for students who have a full work schedule, juggling a number of things in their lives, and trying to make progress in their education so that they can better their lives. It is also just about supporting the educational needs of students who for their own personal reasons are not able to function well in a classroom environment.

There is also the fact that digital education is progressing rapidly, regardless of whether anyone "approves" or "values" it. MIT posts over 2000 free courses online from stellar authors. Salman Khan has posted thus far 2,600 videos (well done and very popular) on topics from a variety of disciplines. Why? Because he says, "we're on a mission to help you learn what you want, when you want, at your own pace." California Virtual Classroom offers more than 19,000 courses and 1,100 degree programs, offered at 170+ accredited institutions of higher education in the CVC Distance Education Catalog.

It really is not a matter of what we think or even what we want. It is a matter of where education is expanding. There will always be classrooms. But with the advance of technology and brilliant instructional design resources based in results from cognitive science, most of the classrooms in the future will be digital. We have a choice. Where do we want to be in the future?

To get from here to there, we need to be serious about the development of our distance education program. We need time to develop the curriculum, understand the need and acquire the technological resources, develop and deliver the standards we want our DE courses to have….I was in Boston this last weekend, and was in a conversation with a professor from Harvard who also said that education is going digital. He was stunned to hear we did not have a DE program and said that if we did not develop one, then it is not a matter of whether or not we will become extinct, it will just be a matter of when.”

From Ira L: “I would be stunned if a Harvard professor were not stunned! How familiar is that person with the joys of public funding??

Regardless, our objective here is not to shove DE down our faculty's throat, but to create a DE program that allows those who wish to participate an
opportunity to do so in the best possible manner, without marginalizing those who choose not to engage in distance education. I was merely reminding everyone that it is important for all faculty to be united on this issue, and given some of the diverse sentiments, marginalization could easily happen.

As past behaviors on other issues have shown, if we do not come up with something that can be supported by everyone, regardless of institutional commitment, it will not succeed.

Just because we have passion does not mean we are "right" and we need keep that in mind. I know Sara recognizes the value of DE and will work diligently with the Academic Senate to produce a plan that addresses everyone's concerns and needs.”

From Sandy B: “Students go to their MyCoM portal, then wait for something to appear. That they wait 5 weeks to send an email to me is another matter, but it is confusing for them. We have to remember that the students are making a big leap, too, from being spoon fed in a f2f course, to a student instigated learning modality. At the very least, we need more info on the main DE page so students are directed to Moodle at the beginning of the term.”

Report from DE discussion at AS 02/21/12 (Kathleen Smyth):
-worry expressed about online replacing face to face
-“Bonnie read off a list of concerns that I was preparing to address but was not given the opportunity. Hank essentially questions the value of DE completely. There was further vetting of the questionnaire.”

Other Business
-Who will go to next meeting of AS? Kathleen Smyth has volunteered.

-Who will go to next Board meeting? Sara Lefkowitz has volunteered.

-Kathleen Smyth nominated February-March Moodle Poster Student: Laura Landry

-Ingrid Kelly continues to advocate for DE’s needs and leadership, while on Sabbatical. She met with Dr. Coon during Feb. 14.
- Staffing for OWC is below level from Fall 2011, though access has grown and self-registration has been implemented as a result of EEIF project.

- Matt Markovich has joined the WASC Rec. 3 Response Team.

- Patrick Kelly spoke about the need for DE to the Board during public comment at Feb. 21 meeting.

- Chelsea McCormick is writing a piece about DE, Moodle, and the OWC for Echo Times. Alisa K has been working with the student reporter.

**Agenda Below:**

Please find below the DEC Agenda for Feb. 22, 3-4:30pm in LC 53.

- Guest: Sara McKinnon
  * Role of DEC in relation to AS; what DEC can do regarding Recommendations 3 & 5; oversight of DE budget
  * Report from meeting with Dr. Coon of Feb. 14

- Kathleen Smyth: Report from AS meeting of Feb. 16

- Alisa Klinger: Report from WASC meeting of Feb. 15
  * Faculty needed for committee (presently constituted as Ken Meier, Susan Andrien, Marshall Northcott, and Alisa Klinger)

- All: WASC Recommendations 3 & 5
  * DE Plan: resources for sustainable infrastructure, quality courses, student support
  * DE Leadership

- All: DE Staffing
  * None in place beyond May 25. Plan for summer needed, as well as ongoing.

- All: DE faculty credentials to teach online as requested by WASC
  * Training; faculty academy

- All: DE Survey: Next steps
*DEC's focus is developing criteria for DE course offerings, though the survey provides a great deal of information about other topics related to the online student's experience.

If you have other items for this agenda or future meetings, please send them to me.

Please know in advance that I have to leave the meeting at 3:55pm to attend Dr. Coon's WASC meeting (scheduled after I scheduled our meeting). Will someone volunteer to chair for the final 35 minutes of the meeting.