



June 26, 2009

CHARGE: Recommendation for Distance Education Policies

For purposes of this charge, I am using the phrase “distance education” as defined by the Instructional Technology Council (<http://www.itcnetwork.org/>): “the process of extending learning, or delivering instructional resource-sharing opportunities, to locations away from a classroom, building or site, to another classroom, building or site by using video, audio, computer, multimedia communications, or some combination of these with other traditional delivery methods.” I further interpret the last phrase (as underlined) to apply on an institutional level; i.e., that distance education modes will be used alongside established “brick and mortar” delivery systems in order to expand institutional programs to more students.

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RESPONSIBLE PERSON/S: Dr. Nancy Allen, plus any individuals who may be included at Dr. Allen’s discretion

DUE DATE OF REPORT: Friday, September 11, 2009. Please note that the due date for this report is different from previously-announced deadlines. Given the date of the charge and the fact that distance education has a funding source separate from standard budgets (the distance education fee), allowing more time to review the issue seemed, in the long run, to be most beneficial to the long-term interests of the university.

RATIONALE FOR REPORT: The former Provost established a distance education committee which submitted two documents: a final report (December 1, 2006) and an implementation plan (May 31, 2007). However, the chair of the distance education committee (Dr. Grady Blount) has stated that no action was taken on the aforementioned report and timeline.

As a result, ASU continues to operate with no clear guidelines for its distance education program, even as such significant distance-education based programs like those in nursing grow and flourish. Additionally, over \$480,000 in distance education fees has been generated from fall 2008 through the first summer session of 2009, but we have only rudimentary guidelines for the expenditure of these funds, guidelines established in early 2009 by an ad hoc committee chaired by Dr. Leslie Mayrand.

Establishing a procedure to govern and support distance education is of utmost important at this point in the growth of the program and for the positioning of ASU in a highly competitive marketplace. For example, the international cultural fluency program proposed to complement the Center for Security Studies could generate dozens of enrollments from servicemen and women in the Air Force. Going into such an aggressive program without the guidance of a comprehensive distance education plan could generate significant problems.

FORMAT OF REPORT:

- Review of current situation
- Discussion of areas of consideration (as outlined below, but not limited to these areas)
- Presentation of recommendations
- Discussion of potential budget implications (costs and revenues)
- Presentation of action plan (with date-specific deadlines and a roster of recommended/required individuals/entities that must review and approve any process)

AREAS OF CONSIDERATION:

The areas cited below are not offered in any order of priority, but are meant to serve as initiators of the dialogue that necessarily must precede the presentation of the final report. In addition, no claim is made regarding the comprehensiveness of this list.

1. How do we define distance education and on-line education?
2. What does existing literature/research indicate in terms of the future of distance education as an alternative delivery method of education?
3. What components of the aforementioned ASU task force reports are still relevant?
4. Where does/should distance education fit within the overall academic delivery priorities of the university? In other words, should the university establish a goal of delivering X% of its programs (both undergraduate and graduate) via on-line as a form of competition or of meeting the needs of underserved populations?
5. Should distance education be limited, generally speaking, to specific academic semesters (e.g., summer-only, Maymester, etc.)? This comment is offered with the knowledge that existing and successful distance education programs currently operate on a year-round basis and therefore is not to be inferred as a desire to limit said programs.
6. Should we tailor our distance education program to specific target markets (e.g., adult students wishing to complete a degree, on-line certificate programs for professionals, etc.)?
7. What competition do we face?
8. How should our faculty be trained? What is the role of the Center for Innovation in Teaching and Research in ongoing faculty development related to distance education?
9. How should the assessment of student learning in an electronic environment be handled?
10. How do we develop faculty participation and buy-in (PAAs, additional compensation for on-line course development, etc.)?
11. If our distance education program expands, what will be the impact on existing Blackboard capabilities and hardware capacity?
12. Do any State guidelines or policies exist that support/limit/define distance education initiatives? How about directives/support from the Texas Tech University System?
13. Are you in agreement with the delineation of distance education funds as established by Dr. Mayrand's committee? If not, how would you restructure the distribution guidelines?
14. What is the recommended content for a policy to guide distance education? Currently, no policy exists that addresses distance education.