

**Report to the FSU Faculty Senate
From the
FSU Distance Learning Committee
For the Academic Year 2015-2016**

The University Distance Learning Committee (DLC) consists of the following members (with their terms):

2013-2016: G. Stacy Sirmans, Business, Chair
2014-2017: Charles Hinnant, College of Information
2015-2018: Chris Lacher, Arts and Sciences

Other Members:

Eric Chicken, Arts and Sciences, UPC Chair
Lee Stepina, GPC Chair
Liz Jakubowski, Education, UCC Chair

Ex officio Members:

Vice President for Academic Affairs or designee (TBA, Associate VP for Academic Affairs)
Vice President for Faculty Development and Advancement or designee
Director, Office of Distance Learning

The Charge of the Distance Learning Committee:

The Distance Learning Committee shall provide policy development, oversight, and academic advice specific to the design and implementation of Distance Learning courses and degree programs. In particular, the committee will have the following responsibilities.

- i. To propose to the Senate procedures and standards for authorization to offer courses and programs by delivery methods other than standard classroom delivery, and for enduring quality control of such course and program offerings.
- ii. To monitor the effectiveness with which the procedures and standards and standards adopted are being implemented.
- iii. To propose to the Senate modifications to existing standards and procedures as appropriate.
This committee will supplement, not supplant, the functions of other existing committees.

The DLC met twice over the academic year 2015-2016. The following is a listing of the topics that we addressed.

November 6, 2015 Meeting Topics and Discussion:

Meeting Attendees: Stacy Sirmans, Charles Hinnant, Chris Lacher, Lee Stepina, Eric Chicken Liz Jakubowski, Susann Rudasill, Joe Clark

A. Online course tuition.

Costs of online courses are usually equal to tuition plus a distance-learning fee. Distance-learning fees are authorized by Florida statute. Fees vary by program, depending on specific

costs of curriculum development, technology tools, and course mentors. Each program's fees are examined annually and adjusted up or down accordingly, on a cost-recovery basis.

To address questions regarding higher tuition and technology fees for online classes, the committee consensus was for ODL to put on its Webpage an explanation of why tuition is different from in-person classes and why fees are charged for online classes. The following language was added to the ODL Website at <http://distance.fsu.edu>.

B. Review of the DL Policy Handbook adopted by the faculty senate in 2012.

The members of the committee agreed to individually review the Distance Learning Policy and Process document and make comments to be discussed at the next meeting. An emphasis will be on methods and suggestions to satisfy course contact hours, in addition to and other than the discussion board.

C. The value of online course renewals every 3 years.

Committee to discuss at its next meeting whether a three-year renewal period is appropriate or whether it should be longer, e.g. five years. Committee members will consider this as they review the Distance Learning Policy and Process document. Committee members will also be getting feedback in this regard from Liz Jakubowski, Chair of the FS Curriculum Committee.

D. Evaluation of online courses.

Committee members, as they review the Distance Learning Policy and Process document, will ponder ways to increase the response rate with online evaluations of online courses. Incentives will be discussed. ODL has launched an Application (Evaluation Kit) that is integrated with Blackboard and eliminates the need for paper/pencil completion of faculty evaluations (eSPCI at <https://distance.fsu.edu/instructors/course-evaluations>). This new Application is being piloted this Semester and will be available for all courses Spring 2016.

E. QER and online classes.

Lee Stepina will send committee members for discussion at its next meeting a list of metrics for evaluating online graduate programs.

F. Restriction on online recruiting and marketing.

A list of restrictions by state is updated continually and is available on the ODL website at <https://distance.fsu.edu/students/state-authorization-status>.

G. Mentor quizzes.

No discussion.

H. ACFS on the SUS 2025 Strategic Plan for online education.

Faculty Senate President, Susan Fiorito will gather more information on this topic for the next committee meeting.

I. Awareness issue.

Students who are in arrears with Student Business Services previously were blocked from Blackboard access per Registrar's Office policy, causing concern with instructors who could no longer see that student's registration and activity in the course. The ODL Bb Unit has programmed the system to notify instructors when their students' status changes and instructors can still access that student's activity prior to and after the access is again granted. This was discussed and the issue is resolved within the Blackboard LMS.

J. Other issues

January 22, 2016 Meeting Topics and Discussion:

Meeting Attendees: Stacy Sirmans, Charles Hinnant, Chris Lacher, Lee Stepina, Eric Chicken Liz Jakubowski, Susann Rudasill, Joe Clark

A. Review of the DL Policy Handbook adopted by the faculty senate in 2012.

Committee members reviewed the DL Policy Handbook and offered revisions that will be compiled and redistributed to the group for final review (attached as a reviewable MSWord doc)

a. Contact Hour Requirements

The Committee agreed to expand the section of the DL Policy Handbook to further define the contact hour requirement and will develop an appendix containing examples of appropriate methods for achieving online contact hours. The Curriculum Request Application (CRA) will also be updated to include a drop-down selection of appropriate contact hour methods. Susann Rudasill will survey the FLVC DL Council Members for additional methods across the SUS used to achieve online contact hours.

b. Three-year Course Review/Renewal Requirement (expecting feedback from FS Curriculum Committee chair Liz Jakubowski)

The Committee agreed to maintain the current 3-year renewal requirement for online course review of methods of instruction (formerly Form 2, now CRA).

c. Evaluation of Online Courses

ODL has purchased an application called "Evaluation Kit" to replace the legacy system for distributing and collecting SPCI. Currently, two course evaluation instruments are available to accommodate either paper or electronic administration:

Paper-based: Student Perception of Courses and Instructors (SPCI)

Electronic: electronic Student Perception of Courses and Instructors (eSPCI)

The ODL Assessment & Testing Unit will continue to support the paper-based option through 2016 but will transition to the new electronic distribution strategy replacing the failing legacy system that is built on antiquated technology.

There was discussion about concerns regarding low response rates and the possibility of offering student incentives for completion of online evaluations – extra credit and/or entry for a prize drawing were suggested.

It was also suggested that the FS Evaluation Committee take up this topic when (if) they meet. Meanwhile, ODL is proceeding with installing and configuring the new application, is running a pilot and will keep this Committee informed. ODL will also keep all FSU instructors advised as to any new options and Bb integrations associated with the new evaluation tool.

B. QER and Online Classes (list of metrics for evaluating online graduate programs provided by Lee Stepina)

Lee Stepina will send Susann and the Committee members the list of metrics for evaluating online graduate programs, as per the QER Committee. There was discussion regarding current methods of course quality evaluation across the SUS and as described in the SUS 2025 Strategic Plan for Online Education.

C. Review of SUS 2025 Strategic Plan for Online Education

Committee Members reviewed the plan prior to the meeting. There was discussion regarding current methods of course quality evaluation across the SUS and as described in the Plan. There was discussion about the data collection metrics in the plan that requires tracking online student “success” in the workplace as well as planned comparisons of online to face-to-face course successful completion rates. Susann mentioned that she is Chair of the Data Sub-Committee for the Steering and Implementation Committees for the Plan and will keep this Committee advised as to progress.

D. Other issues

There was no new business.

E. Comments by committee members and/or others

Chris Lacher mentioned a problem he is having with the lack of synchronization between the Registrar’s student rosters and the Blackboard student list. Apparently the Bb sort algorithm does not allow the instructor to make cohorts using the same student identifier provided by the Registrar’s rosters. There was also discussion about the difficulty with determining 1st day attendance for online courses as related to allowing “late” registered students access. Susann will mention these issues to the Assistant Director for ODL Technology and he will look into the issue with the Registrar’s Office staff and will provide follow-up information to this Committee.

Thanks to all the members of this committee for their willingness to serve.

Respectfully Submitted,

G. Stacy Sirmans