


RADFORD
UNIVERSITY

Brian O. Hemphill, Ph.D.
President

TO: Jake R. Fox, Ph.D.
Faculty Senate President

FROM: Brian O. Hemphill, Ph.D. 
President

DATE: August 24, 2017

RE: Online Education Committee Proposal

I have reviewed the enclosed documentation referred by the Internal Governance Task Force on May 24, 2017 recommending the creation of an Online Education Committee, Committee on Online Education, or Internal Governance Committee on Online Education. Based on a review of the provided information, I am not prepared to move forward with the proposal at this time.

I encourage the Faculty Senate and the Internal Governance Task Force to engage in discussion with Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs Graham Glynn. As you are aware, Provost Glynn recently joined Radford University and has extensive experience regarding online education development and delivery. Once the Provost has an opportunity to fully assess this proposal, I will advise you of any next steps.

Please share this response with the full Faculty Senate.

Schumaker, Ashley

From: Gainer, Kim
Sent: Wednesday, May 24, 2017 10:10 AM
To: Hemphill, Brian
Cc: Schumaker, Ashley; Santopietro, George; Clouse, Katherine
Subject: Online Education Committee
Attachments: Online Education Committee.docx

Dr. Hemphill,

Drs. Hilden and Santopietro are about to begin the process of populating IG Committees for 2017-2018. There is one committee they would like to populate that has not yet made it all the way through the approval process. This is a Committee on Online Education whose establishment was recommended by the 2014-2015 Faculty Senate.

Working from the Faculty Senate motion, The IG Task Force has developed a list of charges and members for the IG Document that both reflects and updates the charges and membership proposed in the original motion (such as adding CBE and representation from the Innovation Lab). The proposed language is attached.

Since the creation of the University Internal Governance Review Committee is still pending, the IG Task Force hopes that the proposal for the committee could be taken up by the University Executive Council.

“Proposed changes to the established internal governance structure and university committees /councils including the establishment of new committees are to be submitted to the University Executive Council through the designated administrator” (IG Document p. 8). The designated administrator for the UEC, authorized to convene the Council, is the “Executive Assistant to the President” (p. 12).

“The actions of the University Executive Council are subject to the approval of the President’s Cabinet” (p. 8).

Thank you on behalf of the Internal Governance Task Force.

Kim Gainer

Dr. Kim Gainer
Interim Associate Dean,

**Proposed IG Document Language for an Online Education Committee
Developed by IG Task in Response to Faculty Senate Motion**

Committee on Online Education

Charges:

- Develop and make recommendations to the Provost for policy on distance, online, CBE learning, and digital learning for undergraduate, graduate, and non-degree seeking students.
- Address the multiple and complex issues emerging from the increasing number of online course offerings and degree programs.
- Continuously ensure a common language for discussion and identification of online learning/programs.
- Research and report on current and emerging online education issues as they relate to standards, practice, and policy at Radford University.
- Coordinate and assess faculty satisfaction with the reliability and usability of instructional tools and platforms.
- Develop accessibility guidelines regarding adaptive technologies.
- Monitor and recommend updates of the Teaching and Research Faculty Handbook to the Faculty Senate so that the guidelines for absence policies, classroom office hours, and other conditions currently defined in terms of face-to-face teaching will also be relevant to online education.

Membership Composition:

- one faculty member with online teaching experience from each of the undergraduate colleges appointed by the FSEC,
- Director of the Center for Accessibility Services,
- Director of the Center for Innovative Teaching and Learning (CITL),
- Director of the Innovation Learning Lab,
- representative selected from the Graduate Affairs Council,
- Assistant Provost for Academic Assessment,
- representative selected by the Council of Chairs,
- Dean selected by the Provost and
- one student appointed by the SGA who has taken at least one online course.

Designated Administrator: Provost for Academic Affairs

Original Motion

Motion re Formation of an Internal Governance Committee on Online Education

Referred by Faculty Issues Committee

Motion

The Faculty Senate recommends the addition of the following language to the *Radford University Internal Governance System and University Committees and Councils*:

Committee on Online Education

Function: Monitors and guides the policies and practices associated with the implementation, assessment and improvement of quality in online and hybrid education. Recommends strategies for ensuring that teaching handbook policies meet the needs of online education and facilitates the development of a common language that highlights the overlap and intersections in the various approaches to online education that are currently being used. Shares policy recommendations with all affected parties and reviews feedback from such parties as well as the Faculty Senate prior to widespread dissemination of these proposals. Thus, this committee will be responsible for the development and dissemination of a university-wide policy associated with online and hybrid education, subject to the approval of the Provost and the Faculty Senate.

Membership Composition: Six T & R faculty, one elected from each college for a 2-year term; one representative each from McConnell library, the DRO, assessment, and the Center for Instructional Technology and Learning (CITL), appointed or elected by the respective unit; and one academic chair and one dean, appointed by the Provost. Half of the first group of members will be appointed for 1-year terms in order to create a staggered turn-over of members.

Designated Administrator: Provost for Academic Affairs

Rationale

In much of the discourse surrounding the current challenges to post-secondary education in the U.S. (e.g., funding, cost, and addressing the needs of diverse traditional and non-traditional students) technology is increasingly playing a role in how educational organizations respond to this current state of affairs. As a result, the University will benefit from the formation of an Internal Governance Committee on Online Education to facilitate and engender a public and sustainable university-wide conversation about online education. This new IG will be a proactive force for harnessing, responding to, and implementing online education in appropriate ways and venues in the university. Above all, it will give faculty a strategic role in responding to the many issues created by a move, no matter how small or large, toward online education.

The Faculty Senate therefore recommends the formation of an Internal Governance Committee on Online Education to:

1. Develop policy relevant to undergraduate and graduate distance, online, and digital learning.

2. Provide university-wide communication and follow-through for relevant policy recommendations.
3. Address the multiple and complex issues emerging from the increasing number of online course offerings and degree programs.
4. Dispel tensions and facilitate conversation and cross-fertilization between the two dominant modes of teaching and learning: online and face-to-face.
5. Research and report on current and emerging online education issues as they relate to practice and policy at Radford University – for example, appropriate use of online vs face-to-face instruction, online course size, use of online ‘boxed courses’, issues of course transformation between the two formats (e.g., equivalency), etc.

Overview of committee responsibilities: The following is a list of issues and tasks that would fall in the domain of this IG. These tasks include (but are not limited to) the provision of:

- A committee that can develop policy and faculty awareness around issues of online course materials including, but not limited to legal code compliance (e.g., copyright and FERPA), intellectual property ownership and transfer, online course development and quality assurance.
- A community of practice for faculty collaborations involved in sustainable online course development with the potential to accommodate changing demographic needs, which highlights faculty distinctiveness rather than a reliance on third-party content providers.
- A committee that can facilitate a university-wide discussion to develop recommendations for online education and digital learning quality indicators, and best practices.
- The formation of a faculty community that can establish a common language for discussion and identification of online learning/programs (for example: synchronous, asynchronous, blended, flipped, hybrid, remote support, CMI (Computer Mediated Instruction), ICT (Information Communication Technology)).
- A faculty driven committee that can collaborate with the administration on online programming and the university’s general strategy for online offerings.
- A committee that can coordinate online education-related communication and policy follow-through with various offices and departments.
- A committee that can provide input in the area of approaches to quality control
- A committee that can update the language in the T&R Handbook so that the guidelines for absence policies, classroom office hours, and other conditions currently defined in terms of face-to-face teaching will also be relevant to online education.
- A committee that can coordinate and assess faculty satisfaction with the reliability and usability of instructional tools and platforms, such as D2L. Questions of relevance will include investigation into dissatisfaction with D2L, specifically regarding downtime, but also including its ease of use or lack thereof and relevance to various academic styles and disciplines. The committee will be asked to consider whether D2L is the best option for online education.
- A committee that can provide assurance that online courses and programs are fully accessible to those individuals using or benefitting from adaptive technologies.

The need for this policy is evident:

- A recent situation with an RU course, dealing with various legal and ethical issues related to online courses, has already led to the development of an ad hoc policy by the Provost's office.
- The 11/7/2013 recommendations of the RU Online Education Taskforce final report directly points to the need for a committee. At a Faculty Issues meeting with representatives of the CITL (Center for Instructional Technology and Learning), concerns raised by both Faculty Issues members and CITL corroborated the RU Online Education Taskforce recommendation for an ongoing body dedicated to the issue of online education. Both groups were in agreement that this "ongoing body" should cross over and bridge concerns that are currently being addressed in several places without being brought together or including examination of how change in one area impacts practices in another.

Without university-wide conversations that explicitly afford spaces for faculty-faculty and faculty-administration discussions about technologies, technology initiatives, and technology-driven policies we may unintentionally:

- Exacerbate fears, concerns, and misinformation among faculty regarding technology-relevant issues, policies, and initiatives.
- Inhibit faculty innovation and receptivity to the university's technology-relevant goals, policies, and initiatives.
- Impede the university's ability to build the necessary capacity and utilize faculty talent and expertise to proactively respond to these on-going changes.
- Hamper the efforts of Chairs to recruit Faculty to teach online classes and support emerging online/hybrid Graduate programs.