

Senate Online Review Committee, Annual Report 2013-14

Meetings: 9/24/13; 10/23/13 (guest: Mary Haley, ETS); 11/13/13 (guests: Kathleen Wilson, chair Online Task Force, and Susan Clemmons, FIU Online); 1/14/14; 3/18/14.

Members: Laurie Shrage (chair), Steven Bernstein, Leonard Bliss, Peter Clarke, Brian Peterson, Lorna Veraldi.

The Online Review Committee met five times this year. In the spring 2014, Lorna Veraldi and Laurie Shrage served on an Online Task Force appointed by the Provost, and chaired by the Faculty Fellow, Kathleen Wilson.

Motions sent to the Senate:

I. The Faculty Senate approves that during a semester in which a faculty member is mostly teaching online and holding office hours with students online, that (1) departments, and other units which coordinate faculty meetings, will attempt to find some way to accommodate faculty who are telecommuting (e.g., via speaker phone, Skype, Adobe Connect...), and (2) departments and other units will permit online faculty to carry out their service assignments online, where this is feasible and does not significantly inconvenience other faculty or our students.

(failed by one vote)

II. The Faculty Senate approves that FIU pilot a process for awarding credit for learning from MOOCs by selecting one UCC course, and then developing assessments and procedures that would allow students to earn course credit and fulfill a UCC requirement without enrolling in the course. The Online Review committee would work with the Core Curriculum Committee to identify a core course and several faculty members for this project. The faculty members would develop an FIU CLEP-style exam that could be used to award credit to those students who have achieved the learning objectives of the course. This exam could then be used as a prototype for developing similar exams for all core curriculum courses--and eventually many other courses outside the core. Faculty who teach sections of the core course would be chosen to develop the prototype exam, and then given appropriate assignment time to complete the task. Choice of a course for the prototype might take into account the availability and completion rates of existing MOOCs that appear relevant to our core curriculum objectives and student outcomes, so that we start with those courses most likely to have MOOC counterparts.

(A friendly amendment to this motion was approved that delegated this project to a faculty member in Psychology, who agreed to develop the prototype exam for

“Introduction to Psychology,” which is a UCC course. See appendix B below for a report we sent to the Senate providing background information for this motion.)

At our meeting on 10/23/13, we approved the following memo, which was sent to the officers of FIU’s UFF:

Dear Teresa,

The Senate’s Online Review Committee has been discussing FIU’s policies regarding office hours for faculty who are primarily teaching online, and applying department and college T&P criteria when evaluating faculty who are teaching online. Below are some of the concerns that have come up.

With regard to office hours, faculty who are teaching online may find it more useful to hold online office hours for their students, using Adobe Connect, Skype, a chat tool, or phone. To hold online office hours, there is no need to travel to campus, and online teaching faculty may prefer to “telecommute” on the days they are teaching and holding office hours online. Telecommuting has many benefits for both faculty and the campus, in terms of saving time and minimizing traffic and parking congestion. What process and guidelines should be followed when online teaching faculty request to telecommute during the semesters they are primarily teaching online?

With regard to evaluating teaching for the purpose of tenure and promotion, there was a concern about whether faculty who are teaching online may be put at a disadvantage. Most departments use student surveys to evaluate faculty teaching quality and, for online classes, the rate of completion of these surveys has been quite low. In some cases, less than 10% of a class will fill them out, and T&P committees may discount the feedback provided due to low numbers. Faculty who are doing an excellent job teaching online courses may find that this part of their performance is not sufficiently counted in the T&P process.

Because both of these issues pertain to terms and conditions of employment, the Online Review Committee requests that UFF investigate these issues and propose language in our next contract that adequately addresses the concerns raised.

We appreciate your efforts on behalf of FIU’s faculty.

Laurie Shrage, Chair, Senate Online Review Committee

Members: Steve Bernstein, Leonard Bliss, Peter Clarke, Jose Longoria, Brian Peterson, Lorna Veraldi

Appendix A:
Report regarding Motion II:

Report from the Senate Online Review Committee, Jan. 8, 2014

(Members, Laurie Shrage (chair), Steve Bernstein, Leonard Bliss, Peter Clarke, Jose Longoria, Brian Peterson, Lorna Veraldi)

A bill is moving forward in the Florida legislature that would require the state universities to award credit for work that students complete in MOOCs and other online courses taken

elsewhere. <http://www.insidehighered.com/news/2013/04/11/florida-legislation-would-require-colleges-grant-credit-some-unaccredited-courses>

The Provost suggested that our committee work together with Kathleen Wilson, the Faculty Fellow, to explore possible methods and procedures for awarding such credit. On Nov. 13, our committee met with Kathleen Wilson and Susan Clemmons, Associate Dean, University College, to discuss a framework for awarding credit for learning and competencies gained through MOOCs and other sources. Dean Clemmons has attended some state-level meetings to discuss how to implement the legislature's possible mandate, and the current thinking is that, rather than evaluate each possible MOOC or transferable online course for possible credit, each campus would come up with ways to measure and assess the learning and competencies needed to pass designated FIU courses. We would then permit students to "test out" of these courses, if they can meet the assessment standards from the learning they have acquired through MOOCs and other independent work.

We propose that FIU pilot a process for awarding credit for learning from MOOCs by selecting one UCC course, and then developing assessments and procedures that would allow students to earn course credit and fulfill a UCC requirement without enrolling in the course. Our committee would work with the Core Curriculum Committee to identify a core course and several faculty members for this project. The faculty members would develop an FIU CLEP-style exam that could be used to award credit to those students who have achieved the learning objectives of the course. This exam could then be used as a prototype for developing similar exams for all core curriculum courses--and eventually many other courses outside the core. Faculty who teach sections of the core course would be chosen to develop the prototype exam, and then given appropriate assignment time to complete the task. Choice of a course for the prototype might take into account the availability and completion rates of existing MOOCs that appear relevant to our core curriculum objectives and student outcomes, so that we start with those courses most likely to have MOOC counterparts.

Appendix B:

Summary of Minutes from the 2013-14:

1. Draft email to UFF regarding online teaching and office hours, and evaluation of online courses. We approved a memo to UFF, and agreed that our request should be sent to Teresa Lucas, current UFF president. (Email was sent on 10/29, and positive responses were received by email from UFF officers.)

2. Draft a policy recommendation regarding accommodating online faculty so they can attend faculty meetings remotely. We formulated a motion and sent it to the Senate Steering committee. Shrage requested feedback on the committee's motion from Senate Steering committee and did not receive any. Shrage offered to provide a report with background on our motion for the Steering Committee and Senate, but was told that the Senate only needed the motion, and it could deliberate on that alone. At the Senate meeting on which it was voted, members of the Steering committee voiced misunderstandings and reservations that they had not sent to our committee, which would have allowed us to revise our motion and/or address concerns. One main concern was whether our proposed policy should apply to all faculty members. Shrage has suggested to the Steering committee and Senate Chair that Senate committees should get feedback on all future motions before they go to the floor of the Senate.

3. Invitation to Matthew Hagood, Director, Media Technology Support, has been sent. Update: Mary Haley, Asst. Director, ETS, will join us at 2:15. We discussed with Mary Haley some of the problems faculty encounter when seeking support for their hybrid and web-assisted courses, including lack of training opportunities, not being notified when Blackboard is down, lack of technical assistance with Blackboard courses for such things as making accommodations for students with disabilities and getting Blackboard to work properly with Turnitin, and constant changes to FIU's course management systems. Haley described the services that are available to faculty, and how and why decisions have been made at FIU regarding software and technical support. We discussed some ways that these services could be better publicized to faculty. We agreed that our committee should be in regular contact with ETS staff, so that information

can flow both ways, and we can work together to solve problems that online faculty and students are experiencing.

4. Drew up list of issues to discuss with the Online Task Force chair regarding the process and procedures for evaluating student learning and giving course credit to students who have completed MOOCs. Kathleen Wilson and Susan Clemmons met with the committee to discuss the legislative and BOG mandate to the SUS in regard to awarding credit to students who complete a MOOC. Our discussion led the committee to develop Motion II, which was modified to be consistent with a recommendation that the Online Task Force developed. See:

http://www.flbog.edu/about/taskforce/doc/2013_12_09_Online-Task-Force-Final-Report.pdf

http://www.flbog.edu/about/taskforce/postsecondary_online.php

"Recommendation #5: Develop and Deliver Statewide For-Credit MOOCs

The BOG, in cooperation with the FCS, should select a lead institution(s) to coordinate the development, delivery, and marketing of for-credit MOOCs that incorporate a quality framework and establish guidelines for competency-based evaluations of non-credit MOOCs."

5. UF's Institute for Online Learning (which will charge .75 tuition to in-state students) might impact online courses and programs at FIU (especially if they allow non-degree students to take their courses; degree students will need to meet UF's admission criteria). Business plan for the Institute for Online Learning can be found at:

http://www.flbog.edu/about/taskforce/doc/online_advisory/09_03_13_AgendaPacket.pdf

Their in-state target markets include Miami (p. 45(52)), and tuition will be \$112.50/SCH for in-state students (p. 47(54)). What is FIU Online doing to assess and address the impact of the launching of UF's Institute for Online Learning? The committee agreed that FIU needs to follow this, and determine whether UF's Institute for Online Learning will allow non-degree students to take their courses. If so, these courses could potentially compete with FIU's online courses, especially given the tuition advantage for in-state students.

6. Open-source Canvas is gaining market

share: <http://chronicle.com/blogs/wiredcampus/for-upstart-learning->

[management-company-an-educause-moment/47551](http://www.instructure.com/reviews-higher-education)

<http://www.instructure.com/reviews-higher-education>

<http://chronicle.com/blogs/wiredcampus/course-management-companies-challenge-mooc-providers>

<http://chronicle.com/blogs/wiredcampus/as-course-management-market-gets-more-competitive-instructure-raises-30-million-in-funds>

We tabled the issue of whether our committee should be exploring new software and technology available to institutions for online learning.

7. The committee reviewed and discussed the final report of the Online Task Force, and decided not to introduce any motion to the Senate regarding this report.

8. New Business

The committee discussed the possibility of working with other units on campus to host one or more university-wide symposia on how online technologies and pedagogies are reshaping higher education.

Respectfully submitted on April 25, 2014

Laurie Shrage, Chair

Professor, Philosophy and Women's and Gender Studies