

Distance Education Committee Meeting

February 1, 2018

Meeting Minutes

1. Meeting Minutes from October 5, 2017 and December 7, 2017 approved and seconded.

2. Review, discussion of policy regarding final exams for online courses, Gary Rader

This discussion was prompted by an email to Gary from an online student who was given a window of one day, 8 am to 5 pm, for completing her final exam. She worked those hours and was asking why the online final would be scheduled so tightly.

MSU Policy Handbook does not specifically address finals for online courses. Most finals are set by the online course instructor, varying from adhering to seated course schedule to allowing up to three days to access and complete online final exam.

The Policy Handbook does have provisions for students to contact their instructors and request a different time if they have more than three finals scheduled in one day or cannot take a final at the scheduled date/time. The difficulty with online course finals and flexible time frames is the prospect of on-campus students taking advantage of an extended time block to share test questions with other students – cheating.

To address changes for online course final exams, the option for developing a policy change in the Policy Handbook involves a lengthy process and multiple levels of administrative and faculty scrutiny.

The suggestion was made to build “best-practices guidelines” for online instructors rather than try to create a major policy change. This would best come from a sub-committee of DEC faculty, and preliminary steps started to build a committee and find sources for policies at other institutions and online education consortiums, membership groups.

3. Follow up on iGrade survey format currently used, Lacey Geiger

Discussion continued regarding iGrade surveys accessed through MyMissouriState and EvaluationKIT surveys generated for online students through Blackboard.

Statements were made that perhaps most of the overall confusion stemmed from a lack of clear communication to faculty and students about the iGrade survey process and purpose when it launched. The frequency of messages for both surveys may have created “survey fatigue” for students.

Suggestions voiced:

- Communicate to faculty more clearly the distinction between the two surveys

- Faculty clarify why two surveys will appear for students with online courses and communicate the importance of completing both

- Place description and purpose for the iGrade survey in course syllabi

- Possible to prompt better participation in survey activity using text messages

Start survey availability launch times further apart to avoid message overload and survey fatigue as a way to increase student participation

No current uniform institutional survey format used; colleges employ different means for distributing surveys. EvaluationKIT survey prompts students with a pop-up window when they log in to Blackboard. Discussion and requests were made for more information about using EvaluationKIT for colleges to administer student surveys, or finding a way develop a more uniform survey access at institutional level. Lacey will continue reviewing options and associated expenses, with follow-up during next meeting.

4. Introduction of Dr. Chuck Hermans, Faculty Fellow in the FCTL and his involvement with marketing of online programs.

Dr. Hermans, marketing professor, is the in-coming Faculty Fellow for FCTL. Area of focus will be identifying growth opportunities with MSU online programs to off-set continued state funding cuts and expected reduction in post-millennial student populations.

He distributed an outline of the objectives and goals for increasing online programs (attached). His directive from the university president is to “identify opportunities to support growth of on-line programs at MSU and expand those offerings to a wider audience to effect enrolments and tuition revenue.”

Dr. Hermans presented current data and goals through 2019 to increase online undergraduate programs from less than 10% to approximately 50%, and increase online graduate programs from 29% to 49%.

Growth of online programs and marketing requires resource commitments from the university, including funding and time investment from key administrators, faculty and staff.

Internal marketing very important to strengthen MSU institutional culture for supporting the planned online programming growth. Presentations and meetings with various MSU administrative and faculty groups are necessary to build internal support and cooperation.

Three current online programs (2 GR and 1 UG) will be identified and selected to begin external marketing efforts. A cross functional committee will be formed and include Outreach, Registrar, Marketing and Communications and the Provost Office to identify administrative policies needed to develop and support high-quality comprehensive online degree programs.

Committee members asked questions and participated in discussing the various aspects of implementing this plan and what was needed from the president and provosts to build momentum and gain cooperation. There was general agreement that to compete in national and regional markets, MSU needs to invest resources to improve visibility and promote online programs. Initial external marketing will focus on states adjacent to Missouri.

Attendees: Jan Atwell, Ching-Wen Chang, Lacey Geiger, Nancy Gordon, Stephanie Hein, Chuck Hermans, Gary Iman, Richard Johnson, Jeff Morrissey, Joye Norris, Gary Rader, Caryn Saxon