

Course Development, Revisions, and Oversight EAC DL Task Force – Team 2 Progress Report

May 13, 2010 Version

Team Two Members

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Overview

Team Two was asked to clarify topics involved in our area, research external practices, identify current internal practices and develop recommendations, which may include strategies and next steps.

Topics

Topics assigned to the team for this area included: retention, intellectual property, academic freedom, academic integrity, testing integrity, course sharing, using captioned media (ADA/DS), disclosure of on-campus requirements, and Quality Control.

Initial team discussion focused on clarifying each of the topic areas. These discussions provided three outcomes. The first outcome was a list of topics that were clarified. The second outcome was discussion on topics that provided an initial exchange of current ideas and perspectives of the team members. The third outcome was that team members would select specific topics to research and bring back their findings to the group.

Topics Clarified:

1. Retention of students once they are enrolled in an online course
2. Academic Integrity - student plagiarism and testing integrity
3. Quality Matters as a tool and as a philosophy

Review of Team Two's discussion points based on internal experiences and observations and external resources provide overview on current thinking and emerging recommendations in each topic assigned.

Student Retention

Literature search provided a rich source of information on why students drop out of online learning courses. Setting aside student retention issues that are unrelated to direct instruction, consistent reasons cited include, but are not limited to: poor course design, instructors' failure to understand the new medium, lack of timeliness of instructor response and feedback, and lack of consideration for a variety of learning styles.

Literature searches also provided a rich body of research results on strategies colleges can use on both an organizational and a course level to improve student retention. These include, but are not limited to,

1. Organizational Level
 - a. Faculty development of student retention strategies in an online course
 - b. Student Services Support
 - c. Student Technology Support
 - d. Online Orientation

2. Course Level
 - a. Student feel connected to the instructor and the course
 - b. Varied means of connection among students, between students and the instructor and course
 - c. Personalized emails and/or phone
 - d. Contact with students who have not checked in
 - e. CPN
 - f. Feedback – lots of feedback provided in a timely manner; checking email several times a day is encouraged
 - g. Practice Quiz

Fall 2009 data was obtained that compared online and campus student retention and success rates by discipline. Initial sense of the group is that PCC has implemented much of what research findings suggest is needed to have strong student retention. Recent additions of student services/resources and additional student technology desk assistance support this effort.

Team discussion on this topic seemed to identify some emerging recommendations:

1. ***Initial sense of the group is that most instructors are aware of retention practices. It is unclear to what extent they are employed.***

- 2. A corollary topic is assessing online instruction. Department chairs and division deans are not as well versed in assessing instructors' online work as they are in observing face-to-face classes. Thus, problems in individual instructors' courses can go unnoticed unless students complain.**
- 3. Distribute to SACs, department chairs, and division deans for further discussion the Fall 2009 PCC data collected that compared online and campus student retention and success rates by discipline**
- 4. Form a work group from across disciplines with faculty, department chair, and division dean representation to discuss retention and provide guidelines and standards for PCC**

Intellectual Property and Academic Freedom

While intellectual property and academic freedom are discrete concepts, they are often intertwined in our discussions. Our discussions and research results confirm that discussion of these areas reveal core personal and professional values about education, the purpose of education, and educational organizations. Excerpts from AAUP Policy provide a glimpse of some of the issues, see Appendix B. PCC Faculty/AP contract language, Article 28, and DL LOA are the two PCC documents that guide practices at PCC. The group discussed reasons for differences in the way that the College defines ownership of materials used in face-to-face and in online courses. We noted that some of these differences may be rooted in the pay that online instructors receive for development.

Team discussion on this topic seemed to identify some emerging recommendations:

- 1. Revisiting this section of the PCC Faculty/AP contract with the union***

Academic Integrity

Research indicates that nothing supports the notion that student cheating occurs more in online courses vs on campus courses. Our discussion revealed two primary areas of concern: plagiarism in assignments and authenticating student identity with test taking.

In studies measuring the extent of student cheating, research designs depend on student perceptions of their own or others' behavior. In a recent study, manual practices allowed the researchers to detect plagiarism in 3% of the cases. When they used system software (from Turnitin.com, in this instance) it appeared in 13% of the cases. This does not appear to be a distance learning issue.

Recent events suggest that there may be more of a concern around academic integrity than the data suspects. AACC Conference, 2010 in Seattle, included a breakout session on distance learning fraud

which includes, but is not limited to, students paying other students to take their course. This is a rapidly emerging concern, heightened by a recent PCC incident where suspicions arose that several PCC students paid surrogates to take Wr 121. This incident requires further investigation.

Team discussion on this topic seemed to identify some emerging recommendations:

- 1. The college should consider undertaking a study of student cheating and weigh out the pros and cons of purchasing and implementing systematic detection software.***
- 2. Student learning assessment techniques vary by discipline and by instructor. SACs are the best place to discuss which student learning assessment techniques are appropriate for a discipline and its corresponding courses.***
- 3. If a SAC determines proctored, on-campus exams are required, the college should support this decision with adequate resources.***
- 4. The college should establish unified on-campus testing processes and procedures***
- 5. If a course has a required on-campus component, in this case testing, this requirement should be clearly stated in the class schedule so students are aware of it at the time of registration. A clear, concise, generic statement noting an on campus presence is recommended***

Course Sharing

As demand for online courses increases, tensions within the system have heightened. Often values compete in the attempt to provide high quality courses in a timely manner. Over the past 10-15 years, disciplines and programs involved in offering online courses, certificates and/or degrees have created systems out of chaos to ease the tensions.

Some factors that contribute to this tension include

1. Available faculty who are content experts
2. Availability of faculty who are knowledgeable about the online teaching environment (course development and teaching strategies)
3. Part-time faculty turn over
4. Part-time faculty connections to the SAC and understanding of the SAC's teaching and learning philosophy
5. Faculty concern for course content and quality – concern seems to be in two primary areas; (a) instruction and course content and (b) appropriate level of depth and rigor. In some areas, consistency is a high concern.
6. Cost effectiveness of developing and maintaining several courses

7. Intellectual property
8. Academic Freedom
9. Student demand for online courses in order to achieve educational goals (number of courses and number of sections of a specific course)
10. Disciplines' philosophy of education and perceived role in education
11. Proliferation of online courses
12. Balancing on line course offerings with on campus course offerings.
13. Concerns that the online environment doesn't meet students' or faculty's pedagogical and interpersonal needs.

A review of the literature, internal interviews, and information gained from external interviews conducted by other DL Task Force teams confirms that PCC is not alone in struggling with these tensions. Strategies created inside PCC subgroups – SACs and DL department - and in other organizations appear to provide potential models that fall on a continuum. At one end of the continuum is course development and instruction that is course-centric, centered on fairly uniform course material that is developed collaboratively by a group of instructors. In the PCC system, this end of the continuum is represented by “master” course shells. At the other end of the continuum are course shells that are centered on the expertise and intellectual development of individual instructors. Currently, PCC has strategies in place that represented each end of the continuum and gradations in the middle.

In a course-centric strategy, the course content, outline, instruction, student evaluation, etc are developed and designed with the intent of replication by several instructors. This strategy is employed in situations to support consistent course quality in an environment where there are a large number of sections of a specific course taught by part-time faculty who have either

1. little or no experience teaching at the college
2. may not have connections with the discipline's SAC
3. have a short-term employment relationship with the college

or in a situation where a unified course curriculum is crucial for course sequencing, accreditation standards, and/or certification standards

In the instructor-centric model, the course content, outline, instruction, student evaluation, etc, is developed and designed with the intent of being instructor specific.

Team discussion on this topic seemed to identify some emerging recommendations:

- 1. Create a work group – faculty, Faculty Mentors, DL representation – to develop a document that identifies potential online course development models, including benefits and limitations, from current PCC course development strategies**
- 2. SACs identify and name the online course model that works for their discipline and program area.**
- 3. SACs also identify a team of faculty responsible for guiding distance learning discussion and decisions within the SAC. In SACs with large number of faculty, a SAC DL Advisory Team may be developed**
- 4. Matrix developed that relates DL Department resources, procedures and practices to SAC recommendations**

Quality Control → Course Quality

Team Two discussions provided consensus that this section of our work needs a name change to clarify the task which is course quality not quality control.

Several years ago, PCC, along with several colleges, invested in Quality Matters (QM) as a means to delivery of high quality online courses. QM was modified to serve the PCC environment. At the time of its purchase and implementation, online teaching was relatively new.

Today we have a greater understanding of the online learning experience. Concerns about Quality Matters exist in the PCC system. These concerns include

1. Treating online courses differently than on campus courses
2. Instructors being told what is and isn't quality education
3. QM's model limits educational expertise of teaching faculty
4. QM supports a reductionist view of the education process
5. Confusion over QM application, intent and role. Questions arise within the institution about whether or not QM is advisory or mandatory; whether its primary intent is to evaluate the course design and material or the course instruction.
6. SAC role in providing course quality oversight of online courses is not clearly understood and disseminated throughout the PCC institution.

Discussion and research discovered that other models exist that focus on course quality and online courses. In addition, team members came upon a DL course form in the PCC Curriculum Office that acknowledges SAC responsibilities to provide course quality control oversight to existing online course sections.

An additional theme that emerged from our conversations is around the relationship of teacher and student and the “function” of education. Concerns were expressed that distance learning promotes and supports a reductionist view of education to the intellectual domain of human development. In this perspective, concern arises that courses offered online ignore or downplay the importance of education in the social, emotional, and spiritual domains of human development. In addition, discussion revealed that the institution’s current focus on outcomes may inadvertently support a narrow interpretation of the educational process and experience to one that is measurable.

Team discussion on this topic seemed to identify some emerging recommendations:

- 1. The current QM process needs to be revisited as a mechanism for course quality. A clearer distinction is needed in its usage as a course development/revision guide and as a review guide.***
- 2. The college should continue its direction of providing Peer Reviews between Faculty Mentors and faculty developing online courses***
- 3. Rubric for Online Instruction, developed at CSU Chico, provides three levels of course development – Baseline, Effective, Exemplary – This distinction may serve PCC well. The language in this tool is more education friendly than QM language. The college should consider adopting a tool, such as this one, or modifying the current QM system to embrace components of the Rubric for Online Instruction model.***
- 4. Course development may be better served by clearly dividing the development/revision process into two phases: initial, which has a Query Guide approach and is more educational approach than product approach; followed by review which is the QM.***
- 5. The college should encourage continued integration of Faculty Mentors with SACs to ease and support development of new online courses and to revise existing courses***
- 6. SACs, SAC liaisons should be informed of and encouraged to review online course for SAC support and approval in accordance with current practice outlined. This be integrated into the Program Review process - see Appendix C***
<http://www.pcc.edu/resources/academic/eac/curriculum/course-development/>

7. Encourage expansion of the college-wide outcomes process to acknowledge the crucial aspects of the educational experience that are not measurable.

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Appendix A

Current PCC practices provide some guidance to assist SACs in their discernment:

Course-centric models (Core course shell) may make the most sense in situations where

- 1. there is a specific course that is taught repeatedly, with numerous sections, and multiple part-time faculty members. Current PCC examples include HE 250, CAS 133*
- 2. the course is part of a specific certificate and/or degree and content consistency depends on learning discrete career technical information, systems, and/or practices*
- 3. the course is part of a course sequence*
- 4. there is high student demand and additional course sections need to be added with little advanced notice*

Instructor-centric model may make the most sense in situations where

- 1. a course is taught as a specialty course as one section by a specific instructor*
- 2. there are a significant number of part-time faculty who are connected to the SAC and are consistently available to teach additional course sections*

Items to consider with each model

Course-centric (Core Course Shell)

- 1. Develop and revise online courses through a faculty team approach. This approach provides for divergent thinking, enriches the discussion, and increases the faculty members sense of ownership of the course*
- 2. Teaching assignments support and coordinate with course development and revision participation*
- 3. Instructors are connected to the SAC*
- 4. Ideally instructors have taught the course on campus*
- 5. College supports team model with resources for part-time faculty involvement*

Instructor-centric

- 1. SAC provides review mechanism*
- 2. Instructor has experience with online environment*
- 3. Instructor is connected to the SAC*
- 4. Instructor has taught the course on campus*

Appendix B

This information is based on the American Association of University Professors Policy and was used to help inform our Team's conversations -

Role of Faculty in Distance Curriculum development

- *Faculty have primary responsibility for determining policies and practices*
- *Departments (SACs) should determine extent to which new technologies of DL will be utilized*
- *Faculty should have oversight of course development and approval, selection of qualified faculty to teach, and make pedagogical determinations to ensure conformity with previous established traditions of course quality and relevance to programs.*
- *Concerns about faculty who create a course but do not deliver the course and have no control over it. Deliverer may not have the same expertise or training as the creator*
- *Problem of "unbundling" practice of "course materials are prepared by a 'content expert' and delivered by a 'faculty facilitator' in a uniform manner, producing predictable and measurable 'outcomes' that fit uniform assessment tools. Such a process of turning education into modular units represents a basic change in an essential characteristic of higher education"*
- *AAUP recommends faculty member who teaches the course have control over future use, modification, distribution and shall determine when material is revised or withdrawn from use.*
- *AAUP advocates that faculty retain the right to reproduction for online materials, the right to use such materials in future scholarly work, and the right of first refusal for future revisions.*

Practices

- *Rider University Faculty have same responsibilities for selection and presentation of materials in DL as in regular courses.*
- *Univ of North Texas- 'faculty retain the right to update, edit or otherwise revise electronically developed course materials....each faculty has the right and moral obligation to revise work on an annual basis in order to maintain academic standards'*

Who Owns online courses? AAUP Policy

- *Regarding "work made for hire doctrine" defined as : "under which an employer can assert ownership over materials prepared by its employees acting within the scope of their employment—is not an appropriate model for wholesale application to the preparation of scholarly and teaching materials because of the nature of academic work and academic freedom."*
- *"Under the principle of academic freedom, faculty members generally have the right to develop and modify course materials within their fields of expertise, and to use pedagogical techniques they deem appropriate for the subject matter"*
- *Federal court opinion have followed traditional academic practice and found faculty authors own copyright in their academic materials*
- *Faculty members who create intellectual property own it, unless there is an agreement between faculty and administration stating otherwise*
- *Products of scholarly activities have been considered owned by the author regardless of the medium in which the work is created*
-

*Exceptions: Extraordinary university resources must be used
Negotiated contract transfers
Joint works*

- *AAUP Statement on Copyright: "It has been the prevailing academic practice to treat the faculty member as the copyright owner of works that are created independently and at the faculty member's own initiative for traditional academic purposes."*

Practices

- *University of Missouri at Columbia: faculty own online courses they create, control how online courses are used, and can leave with course content to another university (Graphics and artwork belong to Univ)*
- *To avoid confusion colleges have contracts-faculty member agrees to develop materials for the institution, and terms and conditions, including ownership are specified in writing*

Source: Euben, Donna R. "Distance Learning and Intellectual Property: Ownership and Related Faculty Rights and Responsibilities", American Association of University Professors Counsel, April 2000. URL <http://www.aaup.org/AAUP/protect/legal/topics/dl-ip-ownership.htm?PF=1>

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