Quality in Distance Education Final Report

Glendale Community College Distance Education Quality Task Force

5/15/2009

Introduction

This report constitutes the findings of the Distance Education Quality Task Force (DEQTF). This task force was jointly appointed by the Academic Senate and the Academic Affairs committee and began meeting in November 2006. Since that time, the DEQTF has regularly met to identify issues and formulate recommendations to ensure quality in the distance education program at Glendale College. The report contains the recommendations of the task force on actions to be taken and the responsible entity for each action (the issues identified and recommendations section), and the broad principles the task force started with (the background and rationale section). Although the permanent governance committee for Distance Education issues is the Technology Mediated Instruction Committee (TMI), the DEQTF members will be available in the future to review any actions taken in the distance education program.

Issues identified and recommendations of the Distance Education Quality Task Force

Following is the list of issues identified by the DEQTF as important to the quality of the GCC Distance Education Program. For each issue, a subcommittee of DEQTF members researched best practices in the higher education community to find a solution and make a recommendation that would both reflect best practices in higher education and also fit the GCC culture and fiscal resources available.

ISSUE	RECOMMENDATION	SUBCOMMITTEE MEMBERS
1. Faculty Training	Recommend comprehensive required training for online and hybrid instructors and develop a teaching and learning center to facilitate communication and exchange of best practices See Appendix 1.	Shereen Allison and Tina Andersen-Wahlberg
2. SLOs and Assessment Methods in Distance Education	SLOs and assessment methods are the same for both distance education classes and traditional classes. However, TMI developed a Distance Education Program Level Mission Statement and Student Learning Outcomes and Assessment Strategies. See Appendix 2.	Roger Bowerman and Edward Karpp for course level SLOs; Shereen Allison for program level SLOs

3. Negotiated Items	These have been approved by the Board for negotiation in 09/10. As language is developed, the TF will provide input to the district negotiating team. See Appendix 3, Item 11.	Kristin Bruno and Shereen Allison
4. Accessibility Issues	Provide training and support for all instructors using online delivery methods so that online course materials comply with Section 508 Standards to ensure accessibility for individuals with disabilities. Requires a fulltime web accessibility specialist. See Appendix 4.	Tina Andersen-Wahlberg and Shereen Allison
5. Code of Student Conduct in Distance Education	Use current GCC Code of Student Conduct with the addition of conduct violations and disciplinary measures specific to distance education classes. This recommendation is pending legal review.	Linda Serra and Kathy Flynn Resource: Paul Schlossman
6. Reporting and Institutional Data	Broaden current reporting measures to include additional surveys, system reports, and tracking of student success and retention over time. See Appendix 6.	Brett Miketta, Shereen Allison, Edward Karpp
7. Resources	Recommend a pilot of Quality Matters (QM) program which uses best practices based on theory and research to clarify characteristics of quality DE courses and guide course development and evaluation. See Appendix 7.	Shereen Allison
8. Review Process	Institute a technical sub-committee of TMI to assist with the DE Course Approval Process due to the volume of instructional technology related issues and emerging technology needs.	Shereen Allison

Background and Rationale

At the outset, the DEQTF adopted some principles by which to measure any recommendations we adopted. The principles included are:

1. Ensure a distance education course is subject to the same scrutiny and exhibits the same rigor as a face-to-face course.
2. Ensure there are sufficient resources and support to develop and implement a high quality distance education program.
3. Ensure a high quality distance education program through appropriate policies, procedures, and evaluation processes.

Summary

In summary, the DEQTF has identified the major issues facing the Distance Education Program at GCC. Further, we have researched best practices in higher education in order make the recommendations for action on each of these issues. Back up data on each issue is attached in the appendices. Finally, the members will be available in the future as needed to review actions taken.

Respectfully submitted by the Members of the Distance Education Quality Task Force,

Kristin Bruno, Chair

Shereen Allison
Tina Andersen-Wahlberg
Roger Bowerman
Kathy Flynn
Rebecca Hillquist
Edward Karpp
Brett Miketta
Linda Serra

Appendix 1

Recommended Training Program for Online and Hybrid Instructors

The Quality in Distance Education Task Force strongly recommends that a faculty training program is implemented as a requirement to teaching an online or hybrid course.

The DE Task Force recommends that this training program includes the following components:

1. Core unit on the pedagogy of teaching in an online or hybrid format
2. Core unit on Accessibility issues related to teaching in an online or hybrid format
3. Core unit on technology training on the Course Management System (currently GCC supported CMS is Blackboard CE8)
4. Offerings should include core courses plus electives such as online collaboration tools, interactive media production, and development of presentation material.
5. Ability to test out of requirements

The DE Task Force advocates examining salary advancement, flex credit, and funding options to support faculty participating in DE training.

While developing a Faculty Training Program in house is a possibility, the limited resources available and the substantial resources needed to develop, run, maintain, and track participation in the program, it is not advisable.

The DE Task Force has noted several options including participating in @One Certification Program. The college has frequently utilized the @One offerings for training and @One is a Chancellor's Office supported training unit addressing the technology needs of California Community Colleges. While the program currently is offered in a format that the committee felt was too intensive, @One is flexible in working with the college to meet our needs and currently has quality face-to-face and online courses in the areas specified above. @One's current model does not have the ability to test out, but this feature is being addressed and it is possible for GCC to develop the testing out feature as well.

Other options include participating in either the College of the Canyons' for credit training program or Cerro Coso's Online Certificate in Online Teaching, which are possibilities but appear to be more costly, time intensive, and less flexible in terms of restructuring how the program is currently offered. These options as well as @One are currently being explored in depth.

Appendix 2

Distance Education Student Learning Outcomes and Assessment Strategies

TMI Approved, May 5, 2009

1. **Students will be able to meet the same level of success as traditional classroom students.** *(this relates to instructional effectiveness of DE mode)*

   Assessment Strategy/Tool
   GCC Institutional Research Comparison of online and hybrid success and retention as compared to same course taught in traditional mode. (Also looking at success in sequential courses)

2. **Students and faculty are satisfied with the technical support provided.** *(this relates more satisfaction with technical support provided by college)*

   Assessment Strategy/Tool
   a. Presidium 24/7 Help Desk Survey
   b. Technical Support Student and Faculty Survey
   c. Chancellor's Office Student and Faculty DE Surveys

3. **Students utilize instructional technologies to meet course requirements.**
   (relates to the ability to use and be exposed to technology technology– such as ability to use chat, discussion, engage in online group work, accessing websites, resources, video etc)

   Assessment Strategy/Tool
   Reporting on usage of tools

4. **Students exhibit self-directed behavior necessary to meet the course requirements.**

   Assessment Strategy/Tool
   a. Pre-post survey (Orientation and Online Survey with self-regulation items)
   b. Retention study on reasons for dropping course
   (address finding with orientations, possible pairing of study skills course)
   c. Presidium 24/7 HelpDesk Reports regarding student contact

Appendix 3

Glendale Community College District

April 20, 2008

FIRST READING REPORT NO. 3

Report of Recommendation

TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: Audre Levy
President/Superintendent

SUBMITTED BY: Vicki Nicholson
Associate Vice President Human Resources

SUBJECT: DISTRICT OPENERS FOR THE 2009-2012 COLLECTIVE BARGAINING AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE DISTRICT AND THE GLENDALE COLLEGE GUILD, LOCAL 2276

The following represents the Districts Openers for the new three year Collective Bargaining Agreement between the District and the Glendale College Guild, Local 2276 of the American Federation of Teachers.

1. **Article VI Hours - Assignment** - The District is interested in clarifying and defining the professional expectation for faculty, i.e., attendance at faculty and division meetings and the ability for full time faculty to bump part timers.

2. **Article VI – Hours, Section 21 Reemployment Rights for Adjunct Faculty** - The District is interested in clarifying how a retiree becomes an adjunct faculty.

3. **Article VII Leaves – Section 8 - Catastrophic Illness Leave** - The District is interested in defining what constitutes catastrophic illness.

4. **Article VIII Salaries – Section 9 Initial Placement On Salary Schedule** - The District is interested in reviewing the requirements for salary placement for vocational faculty.

5. **Article VIII, Section 15 Division Chairs** - The District is interested in defining the role, expectations and compensation of assistant chairs.

6. **Article XI, Section 4 Retirement Benefits.** The District is interested in revising the retirement benefits for internet usage, and establishing parameters to insure system security.

Appendix 3

7. **Article X, Section 1 - Minimum Class Size,** The District is interested in increasing the minimum class size and establishing a timeline for course cancellation.

8. **Article X Class Size, Section 3 Large Lecture** - The District is interested in revising the large lecture compensation.

9. **Article IX Evaluation Procedures , Section 6 Evaluation Calendar – Tenured Faculty , Section 8, Evaluation Calendar Tenure Track Faculty** - The District is interested in revising the evaluation forms, timelines, and developing a performance improvement plan with notification to the appropriate administrator when the overall rating is "needs to improve" or "unsatisfactory".

10. **Article VIII – Salaries – Short Sessions -** The District is interested in revising the short session compensation and defining the duties that are eligible for pro rata pay.

11. **Distance Education** - The District is interested in developing language for online teaching, including load, load limits for first time instruction of online or hybrid courses, new hire language, class size cap, college hour/35 hour week on campus, office hours, faculty evaluations and faculty training.

12. **Division Chair -** The District is revising the assignment, calendar, and load of the Division Chairs.

13. **Part time parity** – The District is interested in creating a definition of part-time parity.

14. **Fitness Center Assignment** – The District is interested in clarifying the hours and compensation for the faculty assigned to work in the Fitness Center.

15. **Discipline** - The District is interested in developing contractual procedures for suspension that will include the principles of progressive discipline.

Appendix 4

Suggested Components of Online Accessibility Training for Faculty:

Rationale: GCC's Board Policy 2241 Section 508 Standards for Electronic and Information Technology (EIT) Accessibility states:

> As mandated by federal and state laws and the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office, it is necessary that the Glendale Community College District comply with Section 508 Standards to ensure accessibility to EIT for individuals with disabilities.

Therefore, all instructors using on-line delivery methods must be well-versed in accessibility issues and must demonstrate appropriate use of methods/strategies used to address those issues. At a minimum, Faculty training must include the following:

1. Disability-related legislation and Web Accessibility Standards
2. Types of disabilities and assistive technologies used
3. Project EASI's 6 Basic Features for content designers to focus on to make content inclusive:
   - 2 general design features:
     - Clearly organized course content
     - Clear and simple Web page design
   - 4 specific access features which we will now discuss:
     - Appropriate use of colors, font types and font sizes
     - Text descriptions for images
     - Use row and column headers for tables
     - Transcriptions, captions and video descriptions for multimedia
4. Use of Headings for structure and navigation
5. PowerPoint files
6. PDF files
7. Blind users and Graphics, Drawings, Designs and Charts
8. Accessibility and usability of different Blackboard (LMS) features (eg: chat rooms, etc.)

APPENDIX 5

Examples of Discussion Board and Chat Room Misuse:

1. Profanity, racist remarks, or negative comments directed toward others, including the instructor or other students (other than appropriate quotes or comments *in context*, not intended in any way to hurt or insult others).

2. Using the Discussion Board or Chat Room as "sounding board" to discuss topics unrelated to the coursework that have not been assigned by the instructor and are without instructor's prior approval.

3. Using the Board or Room as a vehicle to publicly express dissatisfaction with the instructor, the course, or the college, instead of following prescribed steps in GCC policy:
a) discuss with instructor;
b) if not resolved, contact division chair;
c) if not resolved, contact dean who may or may not recommend Judicial Board hearing.

Appendix 6

Evaluation

The task force recommends broadening the current distance education reporting measures.

Current measures include:

- State faculty and student annual Distance Education Survey
- Reporting of overall system (Blackboard CE8 usage)
- Reporting of calls/emails made to the 24/7 Helpdesk
- Success and Retention studies of online and hybrid courses and comparison of rates with traditional courses

In addition the task force recommends:

- Pre-post student Distance Education readiness surveys to evaluate student characteristics/readiness and development of technical skills and self-directed behavior
- Expanding success and retention to include reporting on success and retention in sequential courses whenever possible
- Retention studies on reasons students drop or withdraw from the course
- Additional system reports including section level and overall usage of tools and links within a distance education course

Appendix 7

Quality Matters

In effort to clarify attributes of a quality course, the task force recommends further investigating and optimally piloting the Quality Matters (QM) program as a resource tool. The QM program was created as a joint FIPSE and MOL (Maryland Online Learning) research grant and has since been developed into a self-supporting organization. QM is a faculty-centered, peer review-based process that is designed to certify the quality of online courses and online components. The program received national recognition for its peer-based approach to quality assurance and continuous improvement in online education.

The program is research based and includes a QM Rubric which is a set of standards by which to evaluate the design of online and hybrid courses. The rubric is complete with annotations that explain the application of the standards and the relationship between them. A scoring system and set of online tools facilitate the evaluation by a team of reviewers. QM also provides training and certification at a variety of levels customizable to GCC's needs and requirements. This program is intended to provide clarity of what elements constitute a quality course and proved clear strategies to help instructors develop courses.