Joint Committee on Online Learning
Minutes
March 8, 2013

Present: Anne Seitsinger, Jim Kinnie, Vince Petronio, Kathleen Torrens, Diane Goldsmith, David Porter, Art Meade, Laura Beauvais, Kim Meyert

Minutes from the February 1, 2013 were approved

Statistics: Diane presented some preliminary enrollment statistics for online classes. The Office of Online Learning will be looking at enrollment growth, demographics and retention data. The committee asked that the Office also look at comparison data with on-ground classes. The committee asked that data be brought to the next meeting for further discussion. The committee suggested that we also look to see if retention differs by grade level (i.e. 1st year versus seniors) and/or by number of online courses taken.

Curriculum Affairs Committee: Kathleen Torrens met with CAC at their February meeting. She noted that they had two major concerns:

1. How do you make sure the student taking the online exam is student enrolled in class? Kathleen discussed the importance of numerous and varied assessments as would be good practice in any class.
2. They don’t feel competent to address the syllabi of online courses. Kathleen made sample syllabi available and offered to work as a consultant.
3. She talked about the need to evaluate f2f courses with same lens and scrutiny that they are giving online. But it was clear there was still discomfort with online courses and programs.

The committee discussion resulted in agreement with these principles:

• We use this time of discussion between the CAC and this committee as an opportunity to suggest policies and procedures which would strengthen online learning at URI.
• That we not create extra “hoops” to jump through. The neither this committee, nor staff of the Office of Online Education act as another screen or pre-screen of online courses. But that the Office of Online Learning with the help of this committee could provide the CAC and the various curriculum committees at the Colleges with a checklist of best practices which they can use when evaluating online courses.
• That we work to ensure that online and classroom-based courses are treated the same way by the CAC
• That all online instructors should be trained to teach on line or demonstrate expertise through experience. While this is in fact a different standard than is used for classroom based learning, our logic is that most instructors have spent many years in classrooms, but most have never taken an online class. (We might also argue that all faculty should have training on how to teach – Teaching Fellows, etc.)
• That after a course is approved, it should be up to the department to ensure that the instructor is trained to teach online and that the course maintains its quality. That the Office of Online Learning should make available a list of resources for ensuring faculty have training including dates of the Online Teaching Fellows and Quality Matters Online Courses.

Specifically the committee agreed that:

1. Diane meet with the CAC leadership and make the following suggestions:
   • That this line be removed from CAC policies: Online course proposals require approval for both course and instructor; when all sections of a course use the same syllabus, one proposal will suffice. As with classroom based courses, the assumption is that an approved course is using the approved syllabus. The CAC should not have the responsibility of monitoring who the instructor is for each course.
   • That we provide a checklist and offer training to the CAC to help them evaluate online courses.
   • That we provide a list of professional development opportunities for training faculty to teach online and a list of acceptable substitutes for such training (experience, etc).

2. That Diane ask the Senate Exec Committee for time at the April meeting as a forum on online learning. At that time we would present the Proctored Exam Policy and discuss our suggestion that all instructors teaching online have evidence of prior experience and/or training in teaching online.

3. That should the changes to the CAC, be accepted, that the Office of Online Learning provide Deans and Department Chairs with the same checklist and information about training as an aid to preparing instructors and the CAC forms.

WebEx: WebEx webex.com/ is a sophisticated web conferencing system which can have up to 1,000 participants. David Porter will be providing each member of the committee with a WebEx trial account. He would very much appreciate feedback. The idea is to provide accounts to departments or individuals for a modest fee.

Next Meeting: Scheduled for April 5
same time (1:30-3:00);
same place (Alumni Center Conference Room