

**Report to Faculty Senate
From
Joint Committee on Online and Distance Learning
April 16, 2015**

The Joint Committee on Online and Distance Learning continued to focus on issues related to improving the quality of online learning, including issues in Sakai that impact faculty and students at URI.

1) The committee asked the Sakai team to make it possible for faculty to upload grades directly from Sakai to eCampus. We asked that the process be controlled by the faculty, i.e. not automatic, and that there be an easy way for faculty to adjust grades before they are submitted. The Sakai team created a method whereby faculty can choose to download their grades to an Excel spreadsheet, make any changes necessary, and then upload them to eCampus. Faculty who keep their grades in Excel can also use this method. Faculty can upload midterm grades using this method as well.

2) In response to the NEASC's standard 6 in its Guidelines for the Evaluation of Distance Learning, which requires that the "faculty responsible for delivering online learning...are appropriately qualified and effectively supported," the Joint Committee on Online and Distance Learning passed the attached recommendation. The policy is designed to ensure that all faculty assigned to teach online courses are qualified to do so either through training or review of their existing course using Quality Matters peer review process.

In response to the recommendations the Office of Online Education has revised its training program. It now offers a self-paced Sakai course that takes less than an hour to complete, and two online pedagogy courses. Online Pedagogy 1, which focuses on best practices teaching online, is offered as a three-week asynchronous online course enabling faculty to experience the role of an online student. Online Pedagogy 2, which focuses on course design, is a self-paced course that takes approximately xxx hours to complete. The Office also designed a self-paced course on Universal Design and a self-paced orientation to online learning for students.

The Office for Online Education also paid for 4 faculty to be certified as Quality Matters peer reviewers so they can review courses for instructors who would like feedback on how well their course meets national best practices standards. The Teaching Online website also contains a link to a Quality Matters self-check so faculty can examine their own courses for excellence in course design.

3) Much of the year was devoted to writing an RFP to hire a vendor to host and support Sakai for URI and then reviewing the proposals that came in. Two companies responded, Asahi.net and Longsight. Both were invited to campus to make presentations. The committee is meeting on April 15th to make a final recommendation to state purchasing.