

Recommendations from the Workgroup for Reactivating the Distance Education Advisory Committee (DEAC)

Composition of the DEAC

Because the DEAC will be primarily addressing pedagogical and curriculum issues, we recommend this be a Senate subcommittee. We recommend the following membership structure: first, one faculty member from each division as well as five at-large positions. Secondly, the Curriculum Committee should appoint a “curriculum liaison” to serve on the committee. Additionally, we recommend the following resource members: the chairs of the curriculum and technology committees as well as the manager of distance education. Finally, we urge that select managers and student support staff be consulted regularly when appropriate.

We recognize that is a large committee but feel that a variety of perspectives from all divisions will help ensure our DE program maintains a necessary rigor while also respecting the academic freedom rights of faculty.

Purpose of the DEAC

First, the newly constituted DEAC should review the 2010-2015 Distance Education Strategic Plan and revise/update it where appropriate, in order to publish the 2015-2020 version. In that regard, the committee should see it’s purpose as similar to the 2010 strategic plan: “The purpose of this plan is to reaffirm the mission and vision of the DE program at Fullerton College and establish a collaborative and comprehensive strategic plan that supports the growth and sustains the quality of e-learning at Fullerton College. The DE strategic plan positions the college to respond most effectively and efficiently to growth in demand and to the rapidly changing technological opportunities within the field of e-learning. The DE strategic plan also fulfills the accreditation requirements to support student learning and services, to improve institutional effectiveness and to integrate technology planning and budgeting with institutional planning and budgeting.” The chair of the DEAC should regularly report to both the Senate and the Curriculum Committee.

Specific Issues

After reviewing the previous DE Strategic Plan and the most recent accreditation standards, as well as our own experiences and observations from teaching online classes, members of the workgroup identified three issues that are crucial to the success of our DE program:

1. Maintaining Academic Rigor

- Ensuring that curriculum standards and content are the same as traditional course offerings but that pedagogy is—when appropriate—specific to online teaching

- and learning. Instructors must maintain a “teaching presence” and students must maintain both a “social presence” and “cognitive” presence. (See attached)
- Ensuring academic integrity. FC must ensure the students themselves are doing the work and demonstrating they have met the instructional objectives.
 - Addressing low retention and success rates. To this end, the workgroup recommends that DEAC explore various ways to verify that students are ready to take an online class. For example, the Online Education Initiative offers free modules online to assess a student’s readiness. Perhaps an “online literacy” test could be used to determine whether or not a student needs to take a co-requisite .5-unit or 1-unit class to assist with their online learning. Precedents for such examples exist at other institutions.

2. Offering Effective Student Support

- FC must ensure that adequate student support is available to DE students, support that is commensurate to the level offered to traditional students. The sense of the workgroup was that FC is a long way off from meeting this objective. As noted above, student support staff should be consulted regularly by the DEAC to strategize how we can achieve this goal (and document that we are doing so).

3. Institutional Planning Questions

- Is SLOA data obtained and available?
- Are DE classes used in Program Review?
- By what criteria does the institution decide to offer DE courses?
- What policies exist to ensure articulation and transfer of credit for DE students?

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