

**Faculty Senate Faculty Status and Welfare Committee comments on the Distance Education Steering Committee Initial Report on Centralized Administrative Oversight (Dated May 2010)**

November 5, 2010

Present: Jyotsna Kapur, Lisa Brooten, Jonathan Weisen, Diane Muzio

Regrets: Ira Altman, Mike Lydy, Tom Tarter, Sandra Collins

We discussed the following basic issues we had with the **Distance Education Steering Committee Initial Report**:

1) One fundamental question we discussed has to do with the entrepreneurial nature of the language of both this report and the Overload Policy (we saw them as interrelated), and whether or not we agree with the basic premise they provide. We had concerns about the language and the way the Distance Education report presents the initiative as purely a revenue-generating exercise with no reference to the educational mission of the university and the educational merits of such a project. We note, for example, on p. 7 the statement that “the goal is to increase enrollments and new sources of revenue.” We recommend that the goal of this program be conceptualized in a much broader manner to include goals beyond revenue-generation that correlate better with the overall mission of the university. For example, how will this project help in forwarding our mission to serve underserved populations, contribute to global citizenship and help prepare students for the job market? Also, given SIU’s high profile role in serving military populations, how will this project contribute to this aspect of the university mission?

2) In a related vein, beyond the limited discussion of assessment offered on pp. 19-20, where is the discussion of quality control overall under the “designated programs” developed under this model, and how this will be reflected in the process of approving and supporting these programs?

3) There is confusion regarding the meaning of the word “program” in the “designated programs” model:

Does the word “program” in “designated program” (for example, as defined on p. 6) refer to the conception of “program” as we understand it as a coherent course of study with defined course offerings? Or is it solely referring to a financial model, in which case it can be used to guide the financial development of single courses?

In other words, does this proposal allow for individual faculty members to create online courses, or does it require that they tie such individual courses to a larger

program of study? This confusion is reinforced on p. 8, where the document states that designated programs “refer to non-cost study courses and programs.”

4) We have a question regarding the role of the Faculty Senate in “reviewing and approving the academic programs applying for designated status” (p. 4). Does this mean that every program submitting an application for a designated program needs to be reviewed by Faculty Senate?

5) We feel that a discussion of this report cannot be done with any depth without including the perspectives of the Faculty Senate Undergraduate Curriculum Committee and the Graduate Council. This needs to be an integrated discussion because working conditions depend on both what we are asked to do as well as how we are compensated for what we do. If we separate compensation from issues of curriculum development, we are dividing what we do into indivisible categories that do not reflect the holistic nature of our jobs as faculty. “Faculty welfare” centrally includes issues such as the strength of the university as a whole and how various programs are defined overall and how they are seen to benefit the whole. We are concerned with the ways in which a model such as this works toward segregating us into financially independent “units.”

Does the financial model presented here segregate us in a way that undermines the overall mission – and makes the possibility of those programs that generate more revenue offering a means to subsidize the less popular programs yet vital programs necessary for a well-rounded liberal arts university?

Submitted by Lisa Brooten