

## Faculty Development for Those Teaching Online Courses

### Background

After a review of the literature, the committee put forth before the Faculty Assembly a resolution which called for allocation of resources that are specifically for and unique to online teaching. The resolution passed unanimously at the Faculty Assembly meeting on March 13, 2015.

The resolution:

*Whereas* teaching online presents pedagogical and technological issues that are unique to the medium, and

*Whereas* the faculty who teach online are committed to being both subject matter experts as well as innovative users of the technology based on best practices of online pedagogy, and

*Whereas* faculty training and expertise is in their content area and not in online learning or teaching,

*Whereas* student success has been clearly linked to appropriate pedagogy for the online medium and effective integration of technology

*Therefore, be it resolved that the Faculty Senate recommends that*, resources, coordinated and managed by full-time faculty who teach online, be provide to support faculty development for those teaching online. Faculty development will include workshops that focus on the pedagogy of online teaching, bring experts to campus to share their knowledge and experience, review and provide resources for apps and programs that enhance online teaching, support faculty attendance and participation at conferences, provide mentoring and encourage research into the medium on online learning.

### Recommendations:

Following are specific recommendations that arise from the resolution and are based on best practices outlined in the literature:

1. Structure: Faculty who teach online should serve as the coordinating body of this endeavor. They should be representative of both disciplines and experience.
2. Purpose: The coordinating body should serve as the voice of the faculty in matters associated with online teaching, which include, but are not limited to:
  - a. **Liaising with Administration on all things faculty and online teaching:** While STaR may have its faculty advisory board, and additional committees may be established, we recommend that all these committees interface with the unit coordinating faculty development, in order to avoid redundancy and disconnection.
    - i. This role will also include researching the implications of possible policies that are being recommended.
    - ii. Initiating and making recommendations about decisions associated with online teaching at UALR.
  - b. **Technology being supported by UALR:** Currently there is a wide variety of technologies that are being used creatively on campus to promote

student learning. However, there is no central means of informing faculty about successful uses of these technologies. Another issue is the adoption of tools within Blackboard. These are decided upon without broad based faculty input, although they are the ones who have to employ them. We recommend:

- i. a survey of faculty teaching tools currently being used so that future decisions incorporate these results.
- ii. a faculty needs assessment should be conducted to identify additional tools that may enhance teaching.
- iii. A public platform should be created to publicize and share existing resources, communicate with faculty who teach online, and maximize the outreach of the unit.

c. Allocation of funds for faculty development: Inevitably, the unit will not be able to meet the needs of everyone. Moreover, external input will be beneficial. Faculty should be encouraged to attend and present at conferences that focus on issues in online teaching (such as USDLA, EDUCAUSE etc.) These funds cannot be the responsibility of the home-department as it must focus on content expertise. A mechanism to fund participation in such venues must be developed and be overseen by this unit. Possible sources for support may include:

- i. Fees for membership in appropriate organizations
- ii. Subscription to appropriate online journals for the institution

d. **Development of faculty workshops on the pedagogy of teaching online:** Recognized experts in online teaching, as well as faculty who are experienced in online teaching should be given a platform to share their expertise, in lectures, webinars, and workshop formats. Workshops should focus on a variety of topics and issues, to include latest innovations and pedagogical practices. Communities of learning may be created to allow a cohort to develop and follow its areas of interest. Furthermore, best practices recommend that workshops aimed at course development should employ a developmental trajectory --

- i. Instructional skills followed by course development/mechanics.
- ii. Critical analyses of real teaching and learning situations and customized portfolio for self assessment and progress in instructional skills.
- iii. Research tested strategies, modeling high quality teaching practices, embedded learning opportunities with immediate applications to real world.
- iv. Adopt a data driven culture by providing timely feedback to instructors about instructional quality, sharing data for discussions, and a formal review process connected to research tested strategies and transparency, leading to a flexible program that changes with the times.

e. **Mentoring for faculty:**

- i. Orientation for faculty who will be teaching online: An introduction to BB at UALR, including options that are available, the class cycle (how and when a shell is developed) and university policies.

ii. Mentoring programs should be created attaching experienced faculty with less experienced ones.

**f. Assessment:** With existing assessment committees on campus, this unit will coordinate the online assessment program. The primary goal of the assessment program should be to ensure high quality academic outcomes; however, the assessment program will need to be varied and flexible to produce useful data. As Zhu, Payette, and DeZure (2003) indicate, no single assessment method is likely to produce the data needed for improvement.

Assessment data need to be collected that can be used to plan for the future. Data should be maintained by a single clearinghouse and should be made available to the respective faculty. Online education will by its nature change as technology and pedagogy change and we need to be ready for those changes.

The unit will investigate and recommend effective ways to assess teacher effectiveness and student learning. Assessment should be defined and implemented more broadly than student perception of instructors.

**g. Initiation of and support for research about the scholarship of online teaching**

i. Faculty are encouraged to apply Boyer's scholarship of teaching to online teaching and learning as well. The unit will facilitate this through mechanisms such as research communities.

ii. In instances when the literature is not clear on best practices, or where there is concern that they may need to be adapted for students at UALR, the unit will employ its expertise and employ research to answer the question at hand.

#### References:

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