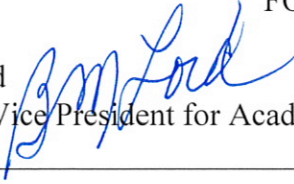


EASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY
OFFICE OF THE PROVOST AND VICE PRESIDENT
FOR ACADEMIC AFFAIRS

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Kathleen Phillips, Health Studies
Debra Reid, History
Linda Simpson, Family & Consumer Sciences
Luke Steinke, School of Technology
Jeff Stowell, Psychology
Rebecca Throneburg, Communication Disorders & Sciences

RE: Ad Hoc On-line Learning Committee

DATE: October 4, 2011

As you are probably aware, I have been discussing the need to empanel a group to consider the future directions of on-line learning/distance-delivered education at Eastern for some time. To assist me, I asked the Faculty Senate to assume the task of soliciting and selecting the faculty members to serve. At its meeting on September 27, 2011 it voted to send me your names, and I am pleased that you will assist in this important reflection.

Before outlining some of the matters that I believe you should consider, let me offer some background. It is no revelation to acknowledge that online delivery of courses (or parts of courses) and in some cases entire degree programs is a growing mode of learning in public, private, and for-profit higher education. It is also a reasonably significant mode of delivery at Eastern. Encouraging online course development here began in 1999, and as part of that effort, steps were taken to incorporate online learning into Eastern's curriculums and into the University's structures of shared governance. These steps were premised on the principle of attracting students primarily from demographic groups unable to take full advantage of the face-to-face opportunities provided both on campus and off campus.

Since that time, changes in the role and extent of online delivery have accelerated across all sectors of higher education driven by student demand and the willingness of faculty and institutions to respond to this demand. For Eastern to respond effectively now in this dynamic environment, we need to assess our current online efforts and chart future directions that will be

appropriate for us. Specifically, we need to understand how online learning should be structured to serve Eastern's students and faculty best, as well as the institution as a whole. We also need to ensure that online courses and programs reflect, as fully as possible, Eastern's commitment to a First Choice/Best in Class educational experience emphasizing student-faculty interaction, effective instruction and integrative learning.

Without restricting the committee's investigations, I would ask that your assessment include examination of the following topics:

1. Analyze a comprehensive list of current online course offerings, and the role of these courses in the curricula of our colleges and departments.
2. Review the current debates among scholars of education about online learning.
3. Compare Eastern's approach to online education with that of peer and non-peer institutions.
4. Recommend priorities for distance education in the context of our mission, the current framework for academic technology, as well as our enrollment goals.
5. Make policy recommendations to CAA, CGS, and COTE regarding online learning.

While I will not chair or meet regularly with this committee, I will see that a first meeting is arranged where we can discuss the tasks of the committee and its charge. I also will designate Mary Herrington Perry as staff support. She handles curricular matters for my office, prepared the formal request which resulted in our approval to offer our three online degrees, and already has available some of the information that the committee will want to review. We will assemble some information about online programs as initial background for the committee. I will leave it to you, as members, to determine who should serve as convener (or co-conveners) and determine future meeting times. We also will discuss a schedule for providing recommendations to me. These recommendations will be discussed with the Faculty Senate and other governance groups as appropriate.

Thank you for your willingness to serve on this important committee.

cc. A. Methven, Chair, Faculty Senate
M. Herrington-Perry
Council of Deans