

CSM Distance Education Committee
Meeting Summary
1–3:00 pm April 21, 2009 Bldg. 19 Room 201, Penthouse

Members Present: Martha Tilmann, chair; Laura Demsetz; Betty Fleming; David McLain; Rosemary Nurre.

Guests: Zeus

The discussions from the March 31st meeting have continued via email. Comments and ideas generated have been added to the meeting notes, then transferred into categories (“buckets”) for further comment, research, and proposals.

The committee approved the following vision statement for the CSM Distance Education Committee:

The CSM Distance Education Committee creates a framework to facilitate the development of distance learning instruction in response to student and community needs.

Goals for the Distance Education Program at CSM will continue to be discussed by email. General areas under consideration are:

- Vision/direction
- Curriculum/Program Development
- Quality/Evaluation/Success
- Student Support
- Faculty Support
- Operational Consistency
- New Technologies
- Communication/Marketing

Sample documents and policies that would be immediately useful were discussed, and members agreed to research and re-word several for the next meeting, with continuing email dialogue.

Madeleine Murphy	will work on Faculty Best Practices, and begin to develop a checklist to suggest for the Faculty Handbook and deans. Murphy will also work on re-wording of the <i>Regular Effective Contact policy</i> and the <i>Classroom Visitation Protocol for Online Courses</i> .
Laura Demsetz	will re-work definitions of types of DE courses, particularly from a student’s point of view. – Suggested icons in the Schedule of Classes to indicate to students the type of delivery, how many meetings are required, etc. Demsetz will also work on wording of a vision statement for CSM Distance Education.

Rosemary Nurre will research and edit a glossary of DE terms.

Madeleine Murphy and Betty Fleming will collect materials and samples on evaluation of DE courses. Suggested to start with existing on-campus evaluation instrument, and try to come up with one document which would apply to on-campus and DL classes. They will also locate sources for statements of Faculty Best Practices in DL.

The Committee discussed whether or not Student Learning Outcomes should be different for DE courses, and formulated the following statement:

To ensure that the academic rigor of Distance Education Courses is at least equivalent to on-campus classes, the Student Learning Outcomes will be the same for any delivery mode.

Martha Tilmann will check into SLO's, and address specific DL issues raised in the accreditation team reports, and particularly noted for the committee by Susan Estes, VPI.

David McLain will check into using icons in the Schedule of Classes to indicate various characteristics of DE courses.

Email exchanges and commentary will continue, and draft statements will be proposed for the next committee meeting.

The next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, May 5, 2009, from 1 – 3 pm in Bldg. 19, Room 201 (Penthouse). Another representative of ASCSM is being sought, because Ms. Loprete has not been able to attend the meetings.

Prepared by: Betty Fleming

Background: It is common practice for administrators and faculty leads to visit on-ground classes occasionally to offer support to instructors as well as to observe students in class settings on campus and to stay connected to the actual practice of instruction. Instructional administrators also have the responsibility to ensure that classes are meeting as posted in the schedule of classes and that the instructor is providing the instruction agreed upon as contracted. When an administrator visits an on-ground class in session, the instructor is present in the room and aware of the visitation. It is appropriate to assume that the same situation should exist during visitations in the virtual classroom. Because it is possible for administrators to observe an online course without the instructor's knowledge, the following protocol has been prepared and will be followed by instructional administrators and department chairs.

Visitation of online courses by administrators and lead faculty may occur for the purposes listed below. The course instructor will be notified via email and/or phone prior to the visitation. No response from the instructor is required prior to the visitation.

This visitation is not to be considered as an evaluation situation.

Visitation of online courses may occur:

1. To ensure that the course is appropriately available to students in the course management system.
2. To ensure that regular effective contact is taking place according the established *Regular Effective Contact Policy* (see attached.) and compliance with Section 508 of the Federal Rehabilitation Act (accessibility for disabled students).
3. In response to a request from the instructor in the course. (questionable student conduct, technical problems, course development review and recommendation.)
4. In response to student complaints about the instructor, the course, or the course management system infrastructure.

An informal email summary of the visitation will be forwarded to the instructor upon the conclusion of the visitation.

Regulations:

Title 5 and the Distance Education Guidelines for the California Community Colleges state:

55211. Instructor Contact.

In addition to the requirements of section 55009 and any locally established requirements applicable to all courses, district-governing boards shall ensure that:

(a) All approved courses offered as distance education include regular effective contact between instructor and students, through group or individual meetings, orientation and review sessions, supplemental seminar or study sessions, field trips, library workshops, telephone contact, correspondence, voice mail, e-mail, or other activities.

(b) All distance education courses are delivered consistent with guidelines issued by the Chancellor pursuant to section 409 of the Procedures and Standing Orders of the Board of Governors. Regular effective contact is an academic and professional matter pursuant to title 5, section 53200.

Background:

In hybrid or fully online courses, ensuring **Regular Effective Instructor/Student Contact** guarantees that the student receives the benefit of the instructor's presence in the learning environment both as a provider of instructional information and as a facilitator of student learning. In a face to face course the instructor is present at each class meeting and interacts via all class announcements, lectures, activities and discussions that take a variety of forms. For example, discussions can be held as part of a lecture format, group work scenarios, or content review sessions. The instructor also serves as a content advisor when he or she answers questions both as they come up in class and as they arise in individual situations. These types of questions are dealt with via the telephone, email, or face to face office visits.

Title V regulations do not make a distinction between regular and distance education courses beyond the need to have a separate curriculum approval process and the need to ensure regular effective contact. Therefore, it is assumed that those qualities of regular effective contact described above for the face to face environment, should also be applied to the distance education situation. The DL Guidelines require colleges to develop a policy regarding regular effective contact that addresses "the type and frequency of interaction appropriate to each DL course/section or session".

Proposed CSM Policy:

All DL courses at CSM, whether hybrid or fully online will include regular effective contact as described below:

- **Initiated interaction:** Instructors will regularly initiate interaction with students to determine that they are accessing and comprehending course material and that they are participating regularly in the activities in the course. Providing students with an open ended question forum, although appropriate, does not constitute the entirety of effective instructor initiated interaction.
- **Frequency:** DL Courses are considered the “virtual equivalent” to face to face courses. Therefore, the frequency of the contact will be at least the same as would be established in a regular, face to face course. At **the very least**, the number of instructor contact hours per week that would be available for face to face students, will also be available, in asynchronous and/or synchronous mode, with students in the DL format. Contact shall be distributed in a manner that will ensure that regular contact is maintained, given the nature of asynchronous instructional methodologies, over the course of a week and should occur as often as is appropriate for the course. **Additionally, the number of virtual office hours should equal the face to face office hours as stated in Administrative Rule 4.03.004. s**
- **Establishing expectations and managing unexpected instructor absence:** An instructor and/or department established policy describing the frequency and timeliness of instructor initiated contact and instructor feedback, will be posted in the syllabus and/or other course documents that are made available for students when the course officially opens each semester. If the instructor must be out of contact briefly for an unexpected reason (such as illness or a family emergency that takes the instructor offline), notification to students will be made in the announcements area of the course that includes when the students can expect regular effective contact to resume. If the offline time results in a lengthy absence (i.e. more than three or four days) a substitute instructor should be sought who can assist students while the instructor is unavailable.

Type of Contact: Regarding the type of contact that will exist in all CSM DL courses, instructors will, at a minimum, use the following resources to initiate contact with students:

- Threaded discussion forums with appropriate instructor participation.
- General email
- Weekly announcements in the Course Management System
- Timely feedback for student work.
- Instructor prepared e-lectures or introductions in the form of e-lectures to any publisher created materials (written, recorded, broadcast, etc.) that, combined with other course materials, creates the “virtual equivalent” of the face to face class.

Suggestions:

- Instructors should also choose to use other forms of communication, as mentioned in section 55211 of Title 5. (“...*through group or individual meetings, orientation and review sessions, supplemental seminar or study sessions, field trips, library workshops, telephone contact, correspondence, voice mail, e-mail, or other activities.*”) and/or CCCConfer, video conference, **pod-cast, or other synchronous technologies may also be included.**
- It is suggested that Instructors should have a threaded discussion that is set aside for general questions about the course and may wish to have weekly or other timely, question and answer sessions available to students. This may also be accomplished through virtual office hours.

Committee on Instruction Approved: xxxx