

**University Senate *Ad Hoc* Committee on Distance Learning
Final Committee Report; March 16, 2009.**

This Committee was proposed at the October 2008 University Senate meeting and formed soon after. Committee members are: Mr. Robert Bremer (Prescott Memorial Library), Dr. Jeffery Hankins, Chair (History), Dr. Richard Hutchinson (Social Sciences), Dr. John Martin (English), Ms. Marilyn Robinson (Graduate School), and Mr. John Swart (Business).

The charge to this Committee from the University Senate President was to: 1) articulate concerns and suggestions of the faculty and staff regarding the recently begun Distance Learning Initiative, 2) work with Dr. James Smith, Interim Director of Distance Learning, to develop proposed solutions, and 3) to report back to the full University Senate at our January 2009 meeting.

The Committee notes that faculty at Louisiana Tech University provides academic instruction that is delivered in a variety of formats: traditional in-class instruction, evening and weekend classes, compressed-video classes, as well as on-line classes. Louisiana Tech's Distance Learning Program defines on-line courses as involving "faculty development and delivery of a course over the Internet to students at a distance while ensuring the same good teaching, learning, and quality found in a resident course. On-line courses are stand alone courses identified with unique section numbers, and are not an extension of resident courses."

I. Compensation. As an expedient during its initiation phase, the Distance Learning Program addressed faculty compensation for online courses by making them part of a full-time faculty member's load (as defined in their appointment), or (in most cases) at a rate of \$45.00 per student credit hour.

During implementation, concerned faculty proposed policy language that would confine compensation for online courses to one of three forms:

In-load: in which "Louisiana Tech online courses may count toward a faculty member's load, as defined by his/her appointment, subject to approval by department chair or dean. On-line courses (3 hour) taught as part of a faculty member's teaching load count as one course."

Overload: in which "if not in-load, online courses may be overload courses, subject to the same pay rate as resident overload courses (8% of the nine-month salary, or \$6,000 maximum, according to Policy 1419)."

Per Student Credit Hour (including 9 or fewer students): "if neither of the above, full-time faculty teaching on-line course(s) not part of their regular load and not receiving full overload compensation may choose to teach online sections to be compensated at \$45.00 per student credit hour. Online undergraduate courses with 9 or fewer students enrolled as of the last day of regular registration will be allowed to make, subject to approval of faculty member, department chair, and dean." (This option was created solely to address the expedient nature of the start-up phase of the Distance Learning Initiative).

The recommendation of this Committee is that the third compensation option should be used only as an expedient, when the first two options cannot be effected. Louisiana Tech University's Workload Policy (No. 2106) specifies that "a base of nine credit hours per quarter or 27 credit hours per academic year will be the reference load for requesting and documenting a teaching load reduction." Overload Policy No. 1419 (Teaching, No. 2) specifies the rate of compensation for teaching on an overload basis is 8% of the 9-month salary rate of the respective faculty member."

Louisiana Tech University's addition of on-line courses as another method of teaching college students should be consistent with the resident courses that are now part of a faculty member's appointed course load, *or* paid at the accepted overload rate. Faculty who are teaching on-line courses would benefit from written confirmation (before their course begins) of the schedule of compensation; monthly, quarterly, annually.

The Committee notes that Louisiana Tech University *does not require* any faculty member to teach online courses. When faculty are requested to teach online courses, it is their responsibility to consult with their departments (s) to ensure that such courses are included in their regular workload or treated as a course overload, as per Policy No. 1419.

II. Intellectual Property. Distance Learning policy currently offers a stipend (or credit) of \$1,750 for initial online course development when working with a mentor from the Instructional Design Team approved by the Distance Learning Director. The result of this collaborative effort "is that the copyright to the course is jointly owned by the faculty member and the university." Faculty members can always choose not to accept the initial course stipend, and will then retain their property rights.

As a way to encourage a creative environment, Louisiana Tech University has long-held a generous approach which secures to each faculty member his/her sole ownership of "traditional academic copyrightable works." As defined in University Policy No. 7112, III, traditional academic copyrightable works are "created independently and at the creator's initiative for traditional academic purposes. Examples include class notes, books, theses, dissertations, educational software (known as course-ware or lesson-ware), articles, non-fiction, fiction, and poems, musical works, graphic works; or other works of artistic imagination that are not created as an institutional initiative."

The recommendation of this Committee is that the Distance Learning Policy language be updated to clarify: "joint ownership of the course means that each owner may grant non-exclusive licenses to others to make and distribute copies of the course materials (syllabi, class notes, course software, and/or links to online information), provided that they share equitably in any profits they may receive from the license with the other owner."

Faculty members should be aware of *their option to not accept the stipend* or credit for initial development of the on-line course, giving them full ownership rights of their online course. If the initial development of an on-line course is truly a collaborative effort between the University and the faculty member (through specialized institutional services or resources), it is appropriate that the University should retain joint ownership of the course.

III. Pedagogy. SACS accreditation requires that "institutions will include the review of their distance learning programs in the Compliance Certification that will be reviewed by the Off-Site Review Committee. The On-Site Review Committee will validate the content of the Compliance Certification . . . and determine whether the institution has adequate support services and personnel to operate distance learning programs effectively."

Louisiana Tech University faculty wishes to ensure that the quality of course-work through the Distance Learning Program is equivalent to that currently offered through resident courses. It is important to make on-line courses pedagogically sound, so that the same credit hours can be awarded as for resident courses and serve as bases for advanced coursework. **The Committee proposes the following recommendations:**

- 1) all faculty teaching on-line courses continue to possess those credentials that are currently prescribed in the Faculty Credentials Guidelines approved in 2006 by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (Commissions on Colleges);
- 2) to provide quality instruction and deliver adequate feedback, on-line class sizes continue to be capped at the recommended limit of 25 students or a reasonable number as determined by faculty, Department Heads, and/or College Deans;
- 3) *prior to* teaching the on-line course, faculty should complete the available training in the technologies needed;
- 4) Louisiana Tech continue to investigate on-line delivery systems alternative to the systems currently in use;
- 5) to make on-line courses available to a wider “global campus”, enrollment should be encouraged from students who do not live in Ruston or the municipal area.

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Robert J. Bremer _____

Richard N. Hutchinson _____

Marilyn J. Robinson _____

Jeffery R. Hankins (Chair) _____

John E. Martin _____

John W. Swart _____