

**Shared Governance Forum Topic adopted FS Meeting of 3/13:
“Balancing Teaching, Instructional Technology, and Distance
Education”
April 1**

The following points are possibilities only. Faculty Senators are invited to suggest deletions, additions, corrections, etc.

Excerpts from the (pending approval) Minutes from March 13 are included here as points of departure.

POSSIBLE points to include for discussion in FS presentation (subject to FS approval):

1. *Recommended by vote of Volunteer Task Force (restated from original question form):*

There is a need to standardize the underpinnings for all courses, regardless of delivery method or length of academic term, and include them in the APPM.

2. *Recommended by vote of Volunteer Task Force (restated from original question):*

There is a need to specify the required use of a Learning Management System for faculty.

3. *Recommended by vote of Volunteer Task Force (restated from original question form):*

There is a need to specify when syllabi are made available to students by the faculty.

COMMENTS by Volunteer Task Force: We should encourage a common date for syllable availability, a common date for when courses become open on Blackboard, and when assignments for the first week become available.

From Faculty Senate discussion (see Minutes, p. 4, March 13, 2019)

- The terms *required*, *recommended*, *standardized*, and *consistent* need to be clarified.
- On what issues is consistency needed? What is required in terms of course delivery and syllabi, and in which cases are requirements an appropriate and reasonable expectation?
- Why are courses offered online? It was noted that there was a working consortium of Oklahoma universities in the early 2000s that contributed to the expansion of online courses.
- The Blackboard “Instructor Guide (revised April 2018)” is an “unwieldy” and lengthy document that attempts to align with Quality Matters (QM) and Academic Partnerships (AP) protocols. The document takes a highly prescriptive or highly suggestive of prescription tone which can lead to these prescriptions being perceived as policy mandates.
- It was noted that there are already some requirements for syllabi: APPM 6.1.1 (syllabi due dates for various schools), APPM 6.7.3 (approval process for distance education courses being offered online for the first time), Teacher Education syllabi, and General Education syllabi. Several compliance statements are required for syllabi, and there were some comments recommending that these requirements be revisited. In addition, the National Council for State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements (NC-SARA) uses certain syllabus information to ensure and facilitate reciprocity agreements for online courses, and the Higher Learning Commission examines a random selection of syllabi in their visits.
- There is clearly a need to untangle these requirements, and the APPM for all modes of course delivery.
- This is a matter of academic freedom and professional competence that should be decided by faculty. Agreed, and that is why the faculty need to take the lead in codifying the APPM in regard to policies and procedures for course delivery.
- A comment was made about the desire to have a one-page maximum syllabus requirement.
- Consistency in terminology needs to be part of a shared conversation, led by faculty, who have the primary responsibility for curricular matters (APPM 3.7.4).
- If faculty do not exercise this responsibility it will be done for/to us.

From Faculty Senate discussion (see Minutes, pp. 5-6, March 13, 2019)

Discussion included the following:

- What are the relevant issues to raise?
- We need to be careful not to frame the forum as pitting faculty against CIDT.
- There were questions about the wording of emails from CIDT. Where are these directives coming from (i.e. what is the source and what were the processes leading to the directives)? The wording of *directives* and *recommendations* lack clarity, which has created some tensions. Examples include the July 2, 2019 email from CIDT requesting that syllabi for all modes of delivery be made available six weeks prior to the start of courses for “preview” purposes. Many viewed this as a requirement. Some viewed the email as an ill-advised attempt to engage students in “course shopping.” For some teaching fall classes, complying with the syllabi recommendation would have involved working over the summer, without compensation. There was a report of at least one adjunct instructor who decided not to teach a scheduled class because of the onerous burden of preparing the syllabus that far in advance. The email noted that “this is a Southeastern initiative, not an AP initiative.” There was no information about where or how this “Southeastern” initiative originated, was decided upon, or by whom it was authorized.
- Other examples mentioned were the recent CIDT emails concerning Term II course availability and adaptive releases. It was noted that there appeared to be some “backing off” of the prescriptive tone of earlier emails.
- Also noted was the March 4, 2019 email from Vice President for Academic Affairs, Bryon Clark, announcing that CIDT would be gathering data from all courses (regardless of mode of delivery) for purposes of accreditation, and for professional development in helping faculty better utilize technology resources.
- Will we need a detailed outline for the forum, or do we want to simply pose some questions for discussion?
- It was noted that many of these issues originated in a time of financial crisis for the university. Now that our situation has improved, we have more “breathing room” to engage in a serious discussion of these issues.

The motion was amended to specify a title for the forum: Balancing Teaching, Instructional Technology, and Distance Education.