FINAL REPORT

OF THE

AD HOC COMMITTEE ON ONLINE LEARNING (ACOL)

Presented at the

675th Regular Meeting of the Faculty Senate

May 15, 2008

Committee Membership

W. Richards Adrion	John Hird
Carol Bigelow	Laetitia LaFollette
Marilyn Billings, Co-Chair	Mark Leckie
Marilyn Blaustein	Matthew Mattingly
Wayne Burleson	Ernest May
Ann Cary	John McCarthy
J. Michael Davis	Jane Miller, Co-Chair*
Victoria Dowling	Richard Rogers
John Dubach	Mei-Yan Shih
Sharon Fross	Martha Stassen
Copper Giloth	Pam Trafford
David Hart	Richard Yuretich
Bryan Harvey	Fred Zinn

* Sara McComb retired as Co-Chair on 9/18/07.

2007-2008 Final Report of the Ad Hoc Committee on Online Learning

The Faculty Senate established an Ad Hoc Committee on Online Learning (ACOL) in September 2004 with the charge to:

> • Oversee academic standards and issues of quality assurance with respect to all UMA
> undergraduate and graduate courses and programs taught online or in hybrid format.
> • Research issues of comparative outcomes assessment with respect to traditional, hybrid, and online courses and programs.
> • Recommend policy changes, as appropriate, to the Graduate Council and the Academic Matters Council.
> • Advise the campus administration with respect to the optimal technological infrastructure appropriate to effective online and technologically assisted instruction, including the University Library.
> • Advise the campus administration with respect to the provision of "how-to" materials and instructional design assistance for new online instructors.
> • Advise the campus administration, the Graduate Council, the Academic Matters Council, the General Education Council, and the Undergraduate Education Council with respect to issues of online learning.

The Ad Hoc Committee met six times during the 2007-2008 academic year.

September 18, 2007:
- Jane Miller replaced Sara McComb as ACOL co-chair. The committee thanked Sara for her hard work.
- Martha Stassen reviewed the Report from the Comparative Outcomes sub-committee. The report indicated that there was no difference between online and face-to-face (F2F) test scores, although students on average prefer F2F instruction.
- The committee reviewed the final report from the Joint Task Force on Online Learning (JTFOL).
- Sara McComb reviewed her presentation to the Faculty Senate Committee of the Whole Panel on Online learning, scheduled for September 20, 2007.
- Richard Rogers discussed the possible creation of a testing center for online students.

November 13, 2007:
- The committee discussed points of contention regarding the report of the JTFOL. There were three primary issues. One was the difficulty of providing equivalent support to faculty on campus and faculty at a distance. Second, was the recommendation that online courses and on-campus courses should be hosted on the same server and use the same learning management system. Third, there

was some concern about the imperative that faculty participate in the decision-making process regarding the development, use and administration of online teaching material, class size, platforms, staffing and other critical administration issues.

- Copper Giloth offered to draft a response to the JTFOL report.
- The committee discussed its future. As a result of last year's report from the Comparative Outcomes Subcommittee whose survey indicated that there is no significant differences in student learning outcomes across F2F and online instructional modes, ACOL's recommendation is that it is no longer necessary for the Committee to review program and course proposals. Instead, the standing committees and Councils involved in F2F course approvals should also review online courses. See ACOL's 2006-2007 annual report Appendix C for the Comparative Outcomes Subcommittee report.

December 11, 2007
- Committee members discussed the fact that SPIRE teaching mode classifications had not yet been implemented. Follow-up with Bryan Harvey confirmed that it will be implemented in Fall 2008.
- Fred Zinn from OIT reported on the Instructional Design Wiki that was being created to support online learning. He reviewed plans to coordinate faculty support, find groups that support faculty using technology on campus and create a community of faculty to encourage collaboration and communication between departments.
- Ben Hood from the library presented materials regarding an information literacy initiative that would integrate information literacy into a General Education requirement. The committee requested a more in-depth presentation in the spring.
- Co-chair Miller reported on her work with the MSP in preparing a proposal for collective bargaining that would address online workload issues.

February 13, 2008
- The committee discussed whether UMass Online and online courses through the Division of Continuing Education (DCE) count towards residency. The discussion was prompted by an earlier request to approve a new online nursing degree. Richard Rogers suggested taking no action on the nursing program since residency questions are not within the purview of the ACOL's charge.
- John McCarthy discussed the changes in revenue sharing for Continuing and Professional Education. The committee discussed next steps, including whether it should develop a general policy regarding revenue sharing for online programs. Later, by request of John McCarthy, it was decided to postpone this discussion indefinitely.
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March 5, 2008
- The committee received a presentation on information literacy by Anne C. Moore, Isabel Espinal and Beth Lang from the library. A definition of information literacy was presented along with several examples of how professors could incorporate information literacy into their lesson plans. It was further noted that UMass must meet information literacy standards for our upcoming NEASC accreditation.
- The committee was generally receptive to the idea of incorporating information literacy requirements into online courses. The presenters were asked to provide a summary of their information literacy recommendations for possible incorporation into the final report of ACOL.

April 2, 2008
- The committee discussed the recent announcement by the President's Office regarding the offering of online courses in China through UMassOnline.
- The incorporation of an information literacy requirement in the final ACOL report was discussed, with a general feeling that UMass should create a tutorial or self-assessment for undergraduate students interested in participating in participating in online courses.
- Fred Zinn reported that faculty members would be able to contribute to a UMass instructional technology wiki during the following week. It was suggested that Richard Rogers assume responsibility for overseeing the wiki.
- It was reported that Richard Rogers was able to create a small testing area in the Learning Commons, but he is still looking for a larger space.
- The committee determined that its work was complete and voted to disband. Co-chairs Billings and Miller thanked the committee for its work.

   Accomplishments of the ACOL:

   - The work of the committee was largely performed through four subcommittees, established in 2004-2005: Academic Standards and Security, Comparative Outcomes, Infrastructure and Library, and Instructional Design. Sen. Doc. No. 05-040 contains the charges and reports of each committee.
   - The committee proposed a formal revision of the SPIRE "instruction mode" classifications that are used to describe courses that incorporate online activities, Sen. Doc. No. 07-007A. Implementation of the revised classification is scheduled for fall 2008.
   - The committee developed a list of talking points that are intended to inform faculty and administrators about the strengths, challenges and common concerns associated with online teaching. (Attachment B, 2006-2007 Annual Report).
   http://www.umass.edu/senate/adhoc/ACOL_Talking_Points_2006-7.pdf

- Through the work of the subcommittee on Comparative Outcomes, the committee determined that there was no difference between online and F2F teaching on either exam performance or course evaluations. (Attachment C, 2006-2007 Annual Report).
- Creation of an instructional wiki for online instructors.
- Generated a recommendation, obtained approval from the Faculty Senate and secured implementation for a Secure Testing Center for online students, Sen. Doc. No. 06-037.

It should be noted that the charge of the ACOL committee had considerable overlap with the charge of the Joint Task Force on Online Learning (JTFOL), commissioned by the Provost. ACOL has reviewed the JTFOL report (Sen. Doc. No. 08-003) and affirms its findings and recommendations, with the caveat that some of the Task Force's recommendations do not address specific issues and obstacles that stand in the way of their implementation (for example: the request for equivalent support for faculty on campus and faculty at a distance, and the request for a single server and Learning Management System for all online and on-campus courses.)

Recommendations of ACOL:

1. We urge the inclusion of an information literacy requirement into all online courses. (See Attachment A)

2. We recommend that Richard Rogers, as Associate Provost for Academic Technology, spearhead the continued work of this committee with the goal of developing a community of faculty who are invested in using teaching technologies for online, blended and in-person classes. Specific tasks would include the development of venues for faculty to share ideas and form communities of best practice. These venues could be either in-person or online (for instance, through the *TeachWithTech UMass* wiki).

3. We recommend that a self-assessment tool be created for students considering a fully online course or program. (See Attachment B)

4. It is the consensus of the committee that after four years of study, and in consideration of the JTFOL report, that special consideration of online courses is no longer necessary. (See Attachment C of the 2006-2007 Annual Report for the Comparative Assessment subcommittee's full report on this topic.) The committee is convinced that online courses are equivalent to face-to-face courses in both learning processes and results, as determined by student test scores and course evaluations. The following represents the unanimous recommendations of the ACOL:

    a. New on-line courses and programs should be subject to the same approval processes as currently exist for any other type of new course or program.

    b. Existing face-to-face courses and programs that are converted, in whole or in part, to the online mode of instruction should not be considered "new" for the purposes of Senate approval processes. However, conversion of courses and programs to the online format must be approved by the department and the school in which they reside.

5. We recommend that the Ad Hoc Committee on Online Learning be dissolved.

MOVED: **That the Faculty Senate receive the Final Report of the Ad Hoc**
35-08   **Committee on Online Learning, as presented in Sen. Doc. No. 08-033,**
                   and thank the Committee for its excellent work which is now complete.

ATTACHMENT A

Information Literacy and Online Learning

Proposal

Submitted to the Faculty Senate Ad Hoc Committee on Online Learning

by Isabel Espinal, Beth Lang and Anne C. Moore

March 2008

> College students use technology constantly. They text-message friends, compile playlists for their iPods, and are whizzes at updating their MySpace profiles. But when it comes to one kind of work they are required to do in college — namely, academic research — they can be inept. Too often, college officials say, students rely on Google or Wikipedia as sources, as if oblivious to peer-reviewed scholarship.

> The Net Generation, it turns out, may not be so tech savvy after all.

> Foster, Andrea L. "Information Navigation 101." *Chronicle of Higher Education* 53.27 (March 9, 2007): A38-A40.

The Library and the Learning Commons hold a prominent place in the physical environment of UMass Amherst. The 28-story W. E. B. Du Bois Library dominates the landscape for miles and with its 24-hour Learning Commons is a popular destination for students and faculty to interact with library and campus resources and services. The efforts of faculty, administrators, and librarians will ensure that the library resources and services are visible and used by online students in their learning.

Online students have a wealth of information available to them. The library is increasing its online materials and resources every day, thus facilitating online learning. However, do students find high quality online resources and support services easily? Do they know how to use them efficiently? Do they know how to evaluate information? Students arrive at UMass Amherst with limited research skills and faculty play an important role in teaching information access and management skills to all students, including those studying online. Students, and especially online students, need guidance and practice in evaluating information sources and in locating high quality journal articles, e-books, and other sources provided for them by UMass Amherst through library subscriptions. Online students discover interlibrary loan, libraries near their home, and high-quality, free resources through contact with our libraries and librarians.

These are the concerns of *Information Literacy*. Information literacy encompasses the skills, knowledge and critical thinking necessary for finding, retrieving, analyzing, and using information. Information Literacy (like writing) is a process, not a discrete set of simple skills

that can be learned in only one lesson. It must be developed, practiced, and reinforced in a variety of courses and contexts over the student's entire academic career.

Information Literacy is now part of the accreditation criteria of the New England Association of Schools and Colleges. UMass Amherst is up for reaccreditation in 2009.

Below are some possible information literacy enhancements for **faculty** *using course management systems and other online learning tools.*

1. Collaborate with subject specialist librarians (http://www.library.umass.edu/reference/liaisons.html) to design and integrate into online courses assignments that help students build their information literacy skills
2. Include subject specialist librarians in a role in online courses that enables them to advise and assist students in becoming information literate
3. Embed library course guides – even widgets – into SPARK, blogs, and web pages
4. Integrate *Ask-A-Librarian* services (IM, phone and email services) into courses: http://www.library.umass.edu/ask/
5. Link to online library resources (including e-books and articles) from inside courses: http://www.library.umass.edu/instruction/faculty/linkguide.html
6. Link to Library Services for Remote Users webpage: http://www.library.umass.edu/distancelearning/index.html
7. Link to Connections Problems webpage and recommend students who experience difficulty accessing library databases and electronic resources submit a description of the problem to dbhelp@library.umass.edu: http://www.library.umass.edu/ndl/connectionprob.html
8. Link to *E-Reserves* and Streaming Video and Audio
9. Integrate *RefWorks* and *Ref Share* (Citation management and sharing software)
10. Integrate *Turnitin* (Plagiarism prevention and detection software)

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http://www.refworks.com/refshare?site=021021114844400000/RWWS5A737260/_105,110,102,111,1
14,109,97,116,105,111,110,32,108,105,116,101,114,97,99,121,32,38,32,111,110,108,105,110,101,32
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Attachment B

Recommendation for the creation of a self-assessment tool for students considering a fully online course or program

Ad Hoc Committee on Online Learning, Instructional Design Subcommittee

2008-APR-18 – Victoria Dowling & Fred Zinn

RATIONALE:

Students often select fully online courses or programs because they would like more flexible class schedules or they live away from the immediate campus area, but they may do so without considering the demands particular to the online learning environment. These demands include appropriate equipment, familiarity and comfort with technology, awareness of the time commitment involved, and a good deal of self-discipline. Determining readiness can be an important first step for any student considering a first online course, since too often they register with unrealistic expectations about the commitment they are making. A readiness self-assessment tool may help students gauge more accurately whether they can be successful in an online course format.

RECOMMENDATION:

The sub-committee recommends that an online self-assessment tool be developed for faculty and students to use in determining whether a student is appropriately prepared to take an online course. UMassOnline and/or Continuing and Professional Education (CPE) at the Amherst Campus should determine the best form for this assessment based on their knowledge of prospective students and in consultation with faculty*. The assessment itself could be developed in collaboration with on-campus groups such as OIT Academic Computing or the Center for Educational Software Development (CESD).

*This assessment could be as simple as a short, well-written checklist, or as complex as an automated survey which provides an evaluation of the student's responses at the end. What form it takes should be carefully considered and the content roughed out on paper before design and programming resources are committed to the project.