Senate Council Retreat
May 24, 2021

Senate's May 3 Discussion on Distance Learning Approvals

Background: At the May 3 University Senate meeting, there was a report from Senate's Distance and e-Learning Committee (SCDLeL), regarding their review of new distance learning regulations from the Department of Education (PDF). The proposal included four recommendations:

A. Revise "University-Level Distance Learning Statements" to become a comprehensive list of DL instruction requirements, list the date when last approved by SC, and include clarifying information from Teaching, Learning, and Academic Innovation regarding DL best practices;

B. Require that all newly proposed DL courses comply with the file described above in A;

C. Encourage senior administration to implement training for instructors who will teach any portion of a course via DL; and

D. Simplify Senate's curricular approval process for DL course delivery by only requiring department and college approval, effectively dropping the current requirements for review by an academic council and placement on 10-day web transmittal for final Senate approval. The SCDLeL also recommends reviewing the changed approval process after three years.

Comments from Senate discussion:
- It would be best to have quality control in place, first.
- Current DL proposals often lack basic information about DL courses.
- The existing poor-quality DL course proposals that are missing required DL components were already reviewed by the department/college.
- Lack of academic council review could harm students who rely on details within course syllabi.
- Proposed change to approval process relies too much on assumptions.
- There are varying definitions of an "online course" across campus.
- The assumption that effective training will be offered could put UK more out of compliance with Department of Education policies on distance learning courses.
- Can the process substitute a clerical review by SC office staff instead of academic council review? DL course proposals that do not meet a defined standard can be returned to the unit.
- Phase in the changes over a year, not immediately.
- First require DL training and then move towards removing review by academic councils.