

Distance Education at Ferris State University – Strategic Plan Task Force March 2003

Rationale

As part of the 2004-06 Planning Process, the Division of Academic Affairs proposed the development of a strategic plan for distance education at Ferris State University. The development of such a strategic plan is in direct support of the University's Strategic Direction Four: employing advanced technology to strategically extend the University's position as a national leader in providing career-oriented academic curricula. Perhaps even more importantly, the development of such a strategic plan is also integrally related to Strategic Direction 1: developing and implementing enrollment growth and coordinating program planning, scheduling and delivery for all FSU delivery sites and for online course/program delivery. Given the budgetary uncertainties of the State of Michigan and the significant commitment of organizational resources and energy needed to provide quality programming, it is more imperative than ever that the University determine the nature and level of its commitment to distance education for the foreseeable future. Although all modes of distance education are within the province of this task force to consider, particular attention should be given to mixed delivery and wholly online delivery of courses and programs.

Charge

The task force is charged with the following responsibilities:

First,

- To review current practices and procedures related to distance education at Ferris State University
- To review national trends relating to the delivery of distance education, including relevant information on enrollment changes, student learning outcomes, and cost/benefit analyses
- To review the characteristics of successful distance delivery systems (best practices)
- To review current distance learning opportunities available to Ferris students from other higher education institutions and how this might impact Ferris offerings

Then,

- To recommend appropriate definitions of the different modes of distance learning delivery
- To recommend a set of criteria by which courses and programs will be considered for distance delivery at Ferris State University
- To recommend a process by which courses and programs will be approved for distance delivery at Ferris State University
- To recommend appropriate policies regarding course development and faculty workload connected with distance learning

- To recommend strategies and policies for adequately preparing students, faculty, and staff for distance learning opportunities
- To recommend means by which the University can ensure that distance education students have a quality experience

All of the deliberative tasks outlined above should be predicated upon two assumptions:

1. For fiscal reasons, the University cannot afford to encourage distance delivery of all courses and programs.
2. For pedagogical reasons, the University should not encourage distance delivery of all courses and programs.

Membership

To undertake this charge, the Vice President for Academic Affairs (VPAA) is appointing a task force comprised of three faculty recommended by the Academic Senate Executive Board, two administrators from units on the Big Rapids campus, one representative from Ferris State University – Grand Rapids (FSU-GR), and one administrator from the VPAA's office.

Caroline Stern – Faculty Member, College of Arts and Sciences

Rick Griffin – Faculty Member, College of Arts and Sciences

Brenda Brown – Faculty Member, College of Allied Health Sciences

Tracy Powers - FSU-GR

Jacqueline Hooper – Dean, College of Allied Health Sciences

Roberta Teahen – Dean, University Center for Extended Learning

Laurie Chesley – Assistant Vice President for Academic Affairs (chair)

The expertise of other parties, from within and/or without the University community, will be sought on an ad hoc basis as deemed necessary by the task force.

Timeline

The task force will begin its work no later than March 2003 and carry out its responsibilities according to the following timeline.

- Prepare a preliminary draft of recommendations to be reviewed by the Academic Senate at their August 2003 Retreat
- Provide opportunities for the University community to offer input/feedback on the preliminary draft of recommendations during Fall Semester 2003
- Deliver a set of final recommendations to the VPAA by December 1, 2003