ANNUAL REPORT

Distance Learning Advisory Committee

**University of North Alabama
Florence, Alabama**

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Committee Chair (2008-09)   Date submitted

Submitted to: Terry Richardson   _____
                Chair, SGC (2009-10)   Date received

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH ALABAMA

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I.   Executive Summary

The Distance Learning Advisory Committee considered the suitability of various learning management systems, the availability of courses throughout the curriculum, the gaps in offerings in general education and other programs, and the needs of the faculty in developing and maintaining quality in DL courses and programs. The full committee scheduled seven meetings, organized for additional meetings in subcommittees of the full committee, and communicated by e-mail between meetings. The committee organized the 2nd Annual Distance Learning Best Practices Conference, which was well received by the campus community.

II.   The Committee's Charge

1. **To serve as a general advisory committee for the University's distance learning program**
2. **To aid the coordination of distance learning programs by gathering information on such programs across the campus and providing this information to program heads and administrators**
3. **To develop recommendations for the improvement of distance learning programs**

III.   The Committee met on the following dates:

9/7/2008, 10/7/2008, 11/4/2008, 1/20/2009, 2/3/2009, 3/3/2009, 4/7/2009, 5/8/2009 (Best Practices Conference)

IV.   What were the Committee's actions and accomplishments this year relative to each of the items of the charge?

1. **The committee's meetings all included updates concerning the enrollments and availability of DL courses which was used to inform the planning for the Distance Learning Best Practices Conference.**
2. **The Distance Learning Best practices Conference addressed all of the items in the charge. The program is provided as a separate file.**
3. **The committee approved two reports that were completed at the request of the Provost: (1) A Comparison of Learning Management Systems (2) Distance Learning Feasibility Study. Both reports can be found on the Distance Learning Advisory Committee's webpage; they are also included with this report as separate files.**

V.   What were the Committee's formal recommendations?

The committee approved a recommendation to organize the 2ⁿᵈ Annual Distance Learning Best Practices Conference and ask for financial support from the Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost.

The committee approved two reports that were completed at the request of the Provost; each included specific recommendations:

> **In <u>A Comparison of Learning Management Systems</u>, the committee made recommendations concerning the adoption of a new LMS to replace WebCT Vista (Blackboard). The university decided to adopt Angel on a trial basis in Fall 2009 and campus-wide in Spring 2010.**

> **In <u>Distance Learning Feasibility Study</u>, the committee recommended that (1) the Distance Learning Advisory Committee be charged with revising the DL Handbook and making it readily available on the university website in a downloadable form, (2) the Undergraduate Curriculum Committee be charged with exploring the feasibility of a complete online General Education core component that could then be utilized by online programs and that (3) the Distance Learning Advisory Committee be charged with examining ways to insure greater uniformity in procedures, tuition and fee structures, and delivery methods of all online programs and degrees at UNA. Also, the committee should examine ways to make all information concerning online programs and degrees available in downloadable form and in a central location on the university website.**

VI.   What does the Committee plan to accomplish

    A.   In the coming year?

- **Evaluate the 2008-09 Distance Learning Best Practices Conference**
- **Organize the 2009-10 Distance Learning Best Practices Conference**
- **Continue to evaluate the processes and funding for contracting with faculty to develop and maintain DL courses**
- **Continue to consider the adequacy and availability of DL courses, particularly the availability of courses in the general education core**
- **Continue the study of quality of DL courses**
- **Continue to evaluate technology options available to support students and faculty in DL courses**
- **Revise the Distance Learning Handbook**

B.   In future years?

Look for ways each year to contribute to the currency and efficiency of our technology and to enhance the availability of quality distance learning opportunities for our students in an environment of ever-changing technology and university growth patterns.

VII.   What are the Committee's weaknesses?

The tremendous growth in online courses/programs has left several gaps in the committee membership where certain interested groups are not adequately represented.

A.   What can the Shared Governance Committee help you do to address the weaknesses?

Ensure that representatives from each online program are represented on the committee.

VIII.   Comments: **None**