ANNUAL REPORT
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DISTANCE LEARNING ADVISORY

University of North Alabama
Florence, Alabama

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Committee Chair	Date submitted

Submitted to: **John G. Thornell, VPAA & Provost**

Title/Committee (if applicable)   Date received

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH ALABAMA

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I. Executive Summary

The Distance Learning Advisory Committee (hereafter referred to as the "Committee") reviewed and considered the TeachACT and copyright use policy at UNA (from 2013-2014 committee), explored the possible implementation of an online teaching award, examined problems associated with the current policy or implementation of the Transfer Student Discipline Release forms, discussed the practicality of a list of essential standards of technology required for online students, deliberated student identification verification, and debated emergency preparedness and business continuity concerning online course presence. The Committee assisted with the planning and implementation of the 2015 Online Learning/Technology Conference.

II. The Committee's Charge (from the Shared Governance Document)
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
4. To handle any proposals the committee may make affecting university policy according to section C.2 "Shared Governance Procedure for Policy Change Recommendations"
5. To submit a final written report electronically by the first day of the fall semester to the Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost with a copy sent to the Chair of the SGEC

III. The Committee met on the following dates:

September 17, 2014	January 21, 2015
October 21, 2014	March 18, 2015
November 12, 2014	April 20, 2015
December 2, 2014	March 11, 2015 (Online Learning/Tech. Conf.)

IV. What were the Committee's actions and accomplishments this year relative to each of the items of the charge?
1. Service
Regarding our advisory capacity to the distance learning program, several issues were debated within our Committee that provided general feedback to ETS. Chief among those were emergency preparedness, student identification verification, and essential standards of technology.
2. Aid

The Committee aided the university in its distance learning programs primarily through the Online Learning/Technology Conference. However, practically it should be noted that most of the gathering of data regarding distance learning is conducted by ETS and not this Committee.

3. Development
The Committee developed formal recommendations impacting distance learning regarding the TeachACT and copyright use policy (carried over from 2013-14). Furthermore suggestions were made concerning Transfer Student Disciplinary Waivers.

4. Proposals
The Committee made 2 formal recommendations (below) and sent these through the shared governance process. It received no new requests from Shared Governance.

5. Report
So submitted.

V. What were the Committee's formal recommendations?
1. The Committee had previously had a task force make recommendations regarding the TeachACT and copyright use policy. Those recommendations were approved by the Committee and the report was forwarded to SGEC for consideration.
2. The Committee asked SGEC to form a task force/work group to examine Transfer Student Discipline Record Release Form policy.

VI. What does the Committee plan to accomplish

A. In the coming year?
1. The Committee formed a subcommittee to review the current charge and name of the DLAC committee to make suggestions for possible changes more in keeping with this changing field. The subcommittee will be working on these changes over the summer and formally make recommendations to the DLAC committee early next year.
2. Examine the issue of remote proctoring options
3. Address issue of training (mandatory or not) for new faculty.

B. In future years?
The Committee will need to continue to find ways to increase our ability to offer courses online, including access to technology, software, etc. In addition, at some point the university will need to address faculty computer/software needs on faculty home computers as they increasingly deal with online issues from their homes.

VII. What are the Committee's weaknesses?
Distance Learning is itself a fast changing world and the once rather clear demarcations between distance learning and in-class courses are becoming less distinct with each passing year. Many classes include online elements and yet

some classes are physically distant (e.g. Athens). Hence, the idea of Distance Learning as a separate entity, even the name, is called into question. Hence, the Committee will be researching potential name changes and potential changes to the charge. Obviously, online elements of learning require technological skills, software, and computer hardware that also are changing rapidly. The concept of online learning is perhaps the most plastic and malleable portion of the university's teaching milieu and the challenge for the university will be how to ensure freedom for innovations at the class level and yet provide some structure across the university to reduce confusion to the students. Too much structure will bind the hands of professors who know their content needs much better than those imposing the structure, but yet too little structure will result in relative chaos to the students attempting to navigate through a course. These decisions will likely not be made easily. As decisions are made regarding this, the Committee and University will need to keep in mind the requirements of regulating bodies (e.g. SACS).

A. What can the Shared Governance Committee help you do to address the weaknesses?
At this time, SGEC should await some internal investigation by the Committee to determine its weaknesses regarding online/distance learning and be prepared for potential changes in this fast changing area of the university. Among these changes may be amending our charge and possible even the name of the committee.

VIII. Comments.
None.