

ANNUAL REPORT
For the 2016-2017 Academic Year
(Due: 1st Day of the Fall Semester, annually)

ONLINE LEARNING ADVISORY COMMITTEE

University of North Alabama
Florence, Alabama

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Committee Chair

04/17/2017
Date Submitted

John G. Thornell, VPAA & Provost
Submitted to: (Title/Committee if applicable)

Date received

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH ALABAMA

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I. Executive Summary

The Online Learning Advisory Committee (hereafter referred to as the “committee”) reviewed and considered the DL Policy and Procedures Manual, the use of consistent designators for online and hybrid courses offerings across colleges, the use of closed-captioning in audio/video content, and the planning of an online learning conference. By the end of the academic year, it was decided by a unanimous vote that the committee was not the appropriate entity to plan and host the online learning conference.

II. The Committee’s Charge (from the Shared Governance Document)

1. To serve as a general advisory committee for the university’s online learning programs
2. To aid the coordination of online learning programs by gathering information on such programs across the campus and providing this information to program heads and administrators as needed or requested
3. To develop recommendations for the improvement of online learning
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 13, 2016	January 19, 2017
October 26, 2016	February 15, 2017
November 16, 2016	April 11, 2017
December 6, 2016	

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 online learning programs, several issues were discussed among our committee that provided general feedback to Educational Technology Services (ETS). These issues included the DL Policy and Procedures

Manual revisions and the use of consistent designators for online and hybrid course offerings across colleges.

2. Aid

Most of the gathering of data regarding online learning is conducted by ETS and not this committee. In the past, this committee offered an Online Learning Conference to the university. However, after much debate, the committee voted to no longer offer the conference both because it is not an official charge of the committee and because we are not given a budget to offer a conference. Instead, we would continue to promote professional development opportunities that have already been scheduled through ETS, such as the PASSHE virtual conference and QM Workshops.

3. Development

The committee developed formal recommendations regarding the use of closed-captioning in online non-text content.

4. Proposals

The committee proposed that the University create an institution-wide policy regarding closed-captioning.

5. Report

So submitted.

V. What were the Committee's formal recommendations?

1. The committee recommended that the University create an institution-wide policy regarding closed-captioning. The recommendation suggested that a University-wide committee be appointed to plan and implement such a policy. Such a committee would benefit from having key constituents across campus involved in the making of the policy, including Disability Support Services and the UNA legal team. Included in the recommendation was a list of possible ways to tackle the cost of adding closed-captioning to all courses.

VI. What does the Committee plan to accomplish

1. In the coming year?
 - a) Continue the discussion of quality of online courses.
 - b) Continue to evaluate technology options for students and faculty in online courses.
 - c) Continue to evaluate professional development opportunities available to faculty teaching online courses.
2. In future years?
 - a) Continue to explore the quality of online courses available.
 - b) Continue to look for ways to support faculty development with regard to technology and online teaching.

VII. What are the Committee's weaknesses?

The most identifiable weakness was that the committee has been organizing and hosting an annual conference without a budget to do so. Each year, the committee

Chair contacts key personnel asking for money to support the conference. The VPAA has asked for ETS to request a line item in their next budget request to pay for the cost of the conference; however, ETS does not feel this is appropriate. By the time money is secured, there is little time left to recruit a keynote speaker. This is something that really should be planned 1-2 years in advance. Due to the funding constraints and because we found that planning a conference is not part of the committee's charge, we have chosen to no longer plan this conference. This type of conference should be organized either by ETS or by a Center for Teaching and Learning (if we had one), but not by an advisory committee.

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

This is really more of a university-level resolution rather than a committee-level resolution, but it was our belief that a centralized office be responsible for offering all professional development activities, including conferences. This could come from ETS or from a Center for Teaching and Learning (if we had one). An annual budget should be allocated to such party to support all types of conferences, workshops, etc. that could provide support to faculty.

VIII. Comments
None