2017-2018 Distance Learning Committee Final Report

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Non-Voting: Vice President Abdallah Haddad, Vice President Edward Jadallah, IT representatives Jim Streicher, CeTEAL representative Tracy Gaskin, and student representative Jessica Hall

COOL Director: Sherri Restauri

The Distance Learning Committee met once a month during the fall and spring semesters. Please find below a report of our work this year.

COOL Grants

COOL Course Development (CD) grant applications for proposals received for both online and hybrid courses in Cohort 7 were voted on and approved, where appropriate. Awards for Cohort 7 totaled $124,500.

A total of 56 COOL grant applications from the following colleges were reviewed, voted on and approved:

- WCOB – 5
- COHFA – 9
- UNIV – 2
- COS – 31
- SCOES – 9

Of these 56 COOL grant classes, 43 were online and 13 were hybrid.

All proposals reviewed this round for the COOL Cohort 7 CFP were approved based on committee evaluation of impact, repeated offerings, availability of current funds, and other factors. Expanded descriptions and instructions on the COOL Grant website and in the CFP have aided faculty in applying more accurately for these grants with a higher likelihood of approval.

At this time, there are 58 individual courses pursuing a COOL Grant course development (CD) certification in Cohort 7, including 6 courses that were granted extensions from previous COOL Grant cohorts (for a total of $129,000 in Cohort 7).

The Committee determined that due to the large number of Cohort 7 COOL Grant CD applicants and awardees, only one CFP would be issued during the 2017-2018 AY. With the hire of one new Instructional Technologist within COOL, reviews are conducted by 2 staff members and the volume was more manageable based on issuing only one call. Likewise, budgetarily and managerially, overseeing this volume of faculty pursuing the COOL Grant was a committee-determined best approach.
Committee Initiatives
The committee voted on the top initiatives relating to enhancement of services and furthering the COOL/Online Learning initiatives for the year and that vote resulted in the following four initiatives: open educational resources (OERs), faculty training requirements, retention rates in online and hybrid classes, and copyright & intellectual property/ownership in online and hybrid classes.

Initiative 1: Open Educational Resources (OERs)
Open Educational Resources (OERs) are materials that are free to use and share. They “reside in the public domain or have been released under an intellectual property license that permits their free use or repurposing by others” (Forward 2017). Some benefits of OERs are that they fit within a contemporary model of education (i.e. shared resources, collaboration, flipped classrooms, etc.), they are free of monetary costs and they are widely available and accessible. A broader view of OERs also incorporates low- and reduced-cost course materials and texts.

The subcommittee assigned to explore OER and related initiatives investigated in depth the many available OERs including the MERLOT repository, MIT Open Courseware, Canvas Commons, and OE Consortium. They also began research to determine which OERs are currently used at peer and aspirant campuses, to determine potential applications at the Coastal campus and specifically within the OL and Hybrid online courses and programs. Moving forward, the DL committee recommends further discussion of this topic with faculty to determine what resources they currently use and what they would be interested in using in the future. Specifically relating to developing our own OER repository at the Coastal campus, the DL sub-committee does not see a need for a campus-wide repository of OERs. The committee recommends educating the faculty at-large about OERs through COOL/CeTEAL training sessions. The DL Committee will be working in conjunction with the OER initiative being facilitated through the COOL department starting in Summer 2018.

References:

Initiative 2: Faculty Training Requirements
This year the faculty training subcommittee considered training requirements for faculty who teach online. Requiring training specifically for online faculty generates two primary questions:

1. How do we justify requiring online faculty to participate in training when we do not require it for faculty who are teaching on campus?
2. How do we handle faculty who are already experienced and successful online instructors?

These are questions that must be addressed before considering any training requirement.

After researching publications and recommendations from other institutions, the subcommittee developed a list of general best practices for professional development of online faculty based on faculty preferences:

- Training should be offered both online and face-to-face. Faculty prefer online training when managing busy schedules but they appreciate the face-to-face opportunities to share ideas with colleagues.
• Online class templates should be provided. Many faculty appreciate having templates for their online classes that reduce the amount of time they need to spend building courses.

• Exemplary online classes should be showcased. Faculty appreciate seeing examples of successful, well-designed online classes.

• Instructional design services should be available. Meeting with an instructional designer who can assist in developing a course design/plan helps faculty streamline the process of developing a quality course.

• Grant or funding opportunities should be provided.

Currently, COOL and CeTEAL provide all of these recommended services and a substantial number of faculty participate in them. If we determine that required training is not a viable route, the DL Committee recommends consideration of other ways to encourage faculty to participate. These may include:

• Formally recognize faculty participation in online course reviews, based on CCU’s Quality Assurance Inventory, in promotion and/or tenure files. Building or improving an online course is a chance for a faculty member to document teaching improvement and/or effectiveness.

• Target adjunct faculty to encourage attendance at workshop sessions and instructional design consultations that help them build a class based on the COOL templates.

• Target new faculty to make them aware of the CCU QAI. They may have taught successfully at a previous institution but they should be made aware of CCU standards and DL support services (instructional design, templates, DLI, student support services).

• Encourage department chairs to advise faculty to undergo course reviews based on CCU’s Quality Assurance Inventory.

References and Resources:


**Initiative 3: Retention Rates in Online and Hybrid Classes**

The subcommittee analyzed data to determine predictors of success in online classes. Preliminary data for undergraduate retention rates and GPAs were analyzed. Detailed analysis is on-going. However, the two predominant variables of course level and cumulative GPA stand out right now as the strongest predictors of success in online classes. A summary of the current findings are included below, and additional data will be analyzed by the DL Committee going forward, with the goal of providing recommendations to COOL on useful training and support materials for faculty and students, updated best practice recommendations, and additional recommendations focused on improving student success in the online classroom environment.

- **Using the cross tabulation between Course Level and Grade Success:**
  Students are more successful in 300 and 400 level online courses than in 100 and 200 level online courses. The majority of online courses are at the 100 and 300 level. The fewest online course offerings are at the 400 level, which has the highest pass percentage of any course level. Recommendations for future data/research would be to determine why 200 and 400 level courses are offered at half the rate of 100 and 300 level courses. Recommendations for action might be to encourage more 400 level online course offerings, as this is our most successful course level.

- **Using the cross tabulation between Class and Grade Success:**
  Students enroll more in online courses as they proceed through the university class levels; i.e. freshmen enroll in the least number of online courses and seniors enroll in the most. The percent passing increases accordingly with advancing class levels. Recommendations for future data/research might be to explore the relationship between the low number of freshman class level students enrolled in online classes (4,272, almost half of sophomores enrolled) and the high number of students enrolled in 100 level courses (14,085). An initial hypothesis would assume that it is mostly freshmen who take 100 level courses. However, after accounting for that, the enrollment indicates that nearly 10,000 students beyond the freshman year take a 100 level course online. The committee recommends exploring why these upperclassmen choose to take 100 level online courses (ex. Core classes for transfers, an easy GPA boosting class, an elective to fulfill).

- **Using the cross tabulation between GPA and Grade Success:**
  Students are more successful in passing online courses the higher their GPA. Students with an F average overall only pass 29% of online courses; this number increases to 54% for D average students, 75% for C average, and 92% for A-B average students. Recommendations for further research are to cross-examine the F average students’ grades in online courses versus in-person courses to ascertain if the failure rate in online courses is statistically significant compared to in-person courses or vice-versa. Recommendations for practice are for the university to strongly dissuade F students from enrolling in online courses, and moderately dissuade D students from enrolling in online courses, due to low success rates which lower their overall GPA even further.

- **Using the cross tabulation between Credits Enrolled and Grade Success:**
  Students with part-time and full-time status are equally successful in online courses. Students enrolled over-time (19 or more credits) see a reduction in success rates of nearly 10%.
Recommendations for future data/research would be to clarify if these students are enrolled in over-time all at the same time, if these are split across two half-semesters, or if these hours constitute dropping full semester courses halfway through the semester and adding half-semester courses in their place. Analyzing the data of half-semester (8 week) versus full-semester (16 week) would be helpful across the board.

### Course Level * Grade Category Crosstabulation

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### Initiative 4: Copyright & Intellectual Property/Ownership in Online & Hybrid Classes

The copyright and intellectual property subcommittee had three main goals during the 17-18 AY:

1. Understand the central questions regarding ownership and intellectual property on campus.
2. Meet with the university’s legal counsel to answer those central questions.
3. Communicate the answers and guidelines to faculty.

In conjunction with other members of the DL Committee and their respective academic and service units on the Coastal campus, a comprehensive list of questions was developed and posed to Tim Meacham and Katherine Brooks from University Counsel. Questions and answers were as follows:

**Q:** Does Coastal have a written copyright policy for works created externally?

**A:** There is no policy in terms of use, unless a work was created at another institution that has a copyright policy. In that case, employees should abide by previous institutions’ rulings. All external work can be used with appropriate copyright.

**Q:** Does intellectual property apply to all course content?
A: Yes, intellectual property applies to all course content. All employees, regardless of designation, should be treated equitably. Intellectual property is shared with the university but not with other faculty directly. It is a departmental decision to make, not up to individual faculty.

Q: Do Coastal employees keep ownership of their course content after they leave Coastal?
A: Yes, they do, but it is a shared ownership with the university.

Q: Is there a database with current Intellectual Property works? Copyright works?
A: Not at this time, at least as far as legal knows.

Q: If a faculty / staff uses Coastal students for an assessment or research study, does the institution or the faculty / staff member own the study?
A: The same shared ownership/shared use model applies. If a student develops the study, it is student owned.

Q: What is the legal stance for faculty using third party tools for their content?
A: Faculty must consider if the tool passes VPAT, if there is technical support, and the three-year rule for maintaining data. We also must consider the use of 3rd party tools where some items like grades are stored. This could present liability issues. For T/L purposes, all contracts, even at the individual faculty level, should be reviewed by legal. Only then can faculty agree to the publisher’s 3rd party tools.

Faculty content hosted on 3rd party sites is still jointly owned with CCU. There is currently no “must” statement regarding Moodle usage except for COOL Grants. Personal liability is created by using 3rd party sites so there is a recommended procedure (though no policy), but it is not enforced.

Q: Are there indemnification forms and related items for 3rd party tools? Where are they housed?
A: These reside in many different locations. Legal has some; some departments may retain copies of others. All 3rd party sites likely have terms and conditions agreements which Legal views as contracts.

The DL Committee may need to obtain additional clarification for some of these topics. Based on our current understanding of the above answers, we recommend the following actions:

1. COOL should develop copyright and intellectual property guidelines for course development in the online and hybrid online learning space and make these available to faculty.
2. COOL and legal counsel should jointly develop a course development section to be added to the university’s Intellectual Property Policy.
3. Legal counsel should research best practices for using tools provided by third party publishers and develop procedures accordingly.
The Distance Learning Committee will work with COOL to disseminate information regarding copyright and intellectual property to faculty.

**Additional Committee Work**

In addition to the projects identified above, the Distance Learning Committee worked on the following activities:

- Finalization of the committee’s 2016-2017 Hybrid initiative, including both training and outreach/educational avenues relating to hybrid courses and programs, as well as the administrative process of adding a “hybrid” designation into WebAdvisor and the course scheduling process
- Updates to the DL Policy
- Review of COOL Grant specifications
- Review of an Online and Hybrid Online Faculty Best Practice Guide
- Provision of feedback on the DL course evaluation instrument

The Distance Learning Committee also periodically reviewed potential academic and instructional technology tools being evaluated by COOL for possible implementation at Coastal.