DISTANCE EDUCATION COMMITTEE MINUTES
Monday, March 12, 2012, 3:30–5pm, Room 1096, TLC

Attendees:
Veronica Lundquist, Francine Van Meter, Kip Nead, Georg Romero, Rachel Mayo, Letitia Scott-Curtis, Ray Kaupp, Craig Hayward

Comments from the floor – Ray Kaupp
Ray described his experience studying a multi-college district (name withheld at district’s request) regarding their distance education programs. His findings reveal one college showed an achievement gap in online education (lower performance for Latina/o population), while the second college had no achievement gap with the same demographic population. Faculty discussions seemed to point to a “culture of excellence” in online teaching at one college—demonstrating increased integration of interaction with students over the first college.

Ray also brought up an issue asking if the committee was looking into whether switching to another LMS would result in a cost savings in licensing fees. Discussion focused on a few key points: Licensing is paid by lottery funds which are highly restrictive in how they can be spent. Georg stated there are few areas where lottery funds can be spent. The college is already transferring the licensing expense out of the general fund and into lottery funds. The college has a contract with Blackboard managed hosting through spring 2014. There has been significant investment of time and training for both staff and faculty that is a cost not calculated by a simple comparison of fees. Costly IT resources (server maintenance, server tech support, and programming tasks) were eliminated by shifting to managed hosting. Rachel stated IT should be involved with any conversation regarding changing to another LMS. Francine, Letitia, Georg, and Kip confirmed the choice of LMS was a shared governance process over a long period of time, including research that weighed a broad range of factors including total costs. Ray stated that he was just wondering if it was a subject we should re-consider based on the current budget situation, but if Renée and IT didn’t think it should be re-visited he would be satisfied.

Review updated Distance Education Program Plan & Review – Francine Van Meter
The committee received the first draft of the DE Plan to review and approve at the next meeting. The plan was revised to reflect the structure outlined in the Guide for Evaluating Distance Education and Correspondence Education, ACCJC, June 2011. The 2009 goals were organized into tables which include a description of the goal, a status update, evaluation of goal outcomes, and suggested revisions where needed.

PRO inquiry: a study on student performance vs. tool use in Blackboard – Craig Hayward
Craig would like to study student performance by looking at engagement of students in distance courses to the activities they perform, and how this associates with success. Francine mentioned the DE Committee discussed the request at the November ’11 meeting and DE faculty thought a cohort study may be appropriate. She also mentioned tools available to faculty in the new version of Blackboard that track student activity and performance in more detail. Things to consider, what tools are used in a course, how often, and how does tool use (or lack of) affect student
performance. Craig and Francine will craft an email that will go out to DE faculty (online and hybrid courses) that ask for participation and allow them to opt out of the study if desired.

**Standards for quality online education** – Francine Van Meter
Francine discussed issues with faculty preparedness for online teaching. There are currently 205 faculty using Blackboard for online, hybrid, and web-enhanced instruction. Of that number, only one-third participated in training of 2 hours or more. There are also 8,700+ students using Blackboard. Faculty preparedness has an impact on the volume of helpdesk service requests from both faculty and students. The TLC will be initiating some process that requires training before a faculty member gets a Blackboard account. The training can be delivered in person, online, but most importantly, at the faculty member’s convenience. The TLC hopes to focus future training efforts on more advanced student assessment tools and communication tools that improve effective contact between the instructor and student.