September 29, 2006

Dear Curriculum Council and Ecampus Subcommittee Members:

I have met with leadership here at Ecampus for input in response to the subcommittee's comments and recommendations. The bulk of the issues raised revolved around assurance of course quality and equivalence between Ecampus online courses and on-campus traditional courses. In reviewing the summary comments from the Subcommittee, it is unfortunate that an Ecampus representative was not involved. Many of the issues could have been addressed at that time. I appreciated the Council's co-chair's recognition of this unintended omission. That said, I believe we can successfully address all of the Subcommittee's concerns and look forward to the forthcoming discussion on OSU courses offered through Ecampus, which has been postponed to the next academic year. In addition, to fully address these issues it might be helpful for Ecampus to be invited to give a brief presentation to the Council and to address questions of the Council members.

Our responses to the seven concerns/questions posed by the Subcommittee:

1. *Students should not be in situations that require them to take an e-campus course over an on-campus course if they do not want to do so?*

Ecampus is very much aware of the current anomaly of on-campus student taking courses through Ecampus. As you know, our stated mission is to provide educational options to distance students. The fact that on-campus students are choosing to take courses through Ecampus is clearly symptomatic of an unavailability of courses on-campus, the shortage being the result of OSU's current budgetary problems. In a recent survey of students taking Ecampus courses only 30% indicated course unavailability as the reason for their choice; more significant reasons were related to schedule flexibility, commuting issues and the preference of the online modality. Nevertheless, Ecampus is concerned with the increase in campus students opting to take Ecampus courses for a number of reasons, one of which being the resultant unavailability of spaces in courses for true distance students. With the expansion of OSU's Degree Partnership Program agreements with Oregon's community colleges courses offered through Ecampus we will face increasing demand from those distance students, who are currently competing with on-campus students for course space. Ecampus, regretfully, has become a de facto solution to an on-campus problem, over which Ecampus has no control. We are willing to work with departments and colleges to find a better solution to the on-campus course access problems.

2. *In general, a sense of uncertainty about how hands-on components of campus based courses are met with e-campus delivery modes; ~30 e-campus courses have laboratory/recitation/field trips in catalog course descriptions.*
In developing an existing OSU course for online delivery, Ecampus collaborates with the academic faculty member to "translate" the course for distance students. Using the on campus course syllabus as the basis for course development, the course is designed to meet the stated learning outcomes as in the site based course. For example: if a course requires a field trip to collect and analyze soil samples, the on campus course might go to a field site as a group; the equivalent field experience for distance students would be to perform a visit to a field site, gather samples and perform the same analysis that the on campus students would be required to make. The online students would share their field experiences, analysis and results to the group via online posting in Blackboard, where the instructor would provide feedback for the individual and for the group to view. An added benefit is that the field visits would differ for each person depending on their location, thus adding to the diversity of discussion and course content.

All decisions on how to perform lab/recitation/field trip equivalents online are made by the faculty member as the course content expert, in collaboration with Ecampus. An example of a lab through Ecampus is contained in Chem 122. This is a "virtual lab" accessed via the internet, which the faculty and Chemistry department have approved of as meeting their standard for a lab experience within this course. To emphasize, the faculty are deferred to in determining how the course will be delivered in order to meet stated learning objectives.

More broadly speaking, the role of Ecampus is to facilitate the delivery of OSU courses and programs to distance students in a variety of modalities, which includes not only online instruction, but also may include face-to-face, video conferencing or some combination of these modalities.

3. **Skepticism that a virtual lab is equivalent to a wet laboratory. What is the purpose of a wet laboratory?**

   See number #2 above.

4. **Lack of understanding about approval process for e-campus courses; discrepancy between what is stated on the e-campus web site with respect to the approval process and several anecdotal reports.**

All credit courses offered through Ecampus have received curricular review and approval through the formal process administered by the Curriculum Council. It is the role of Ecampus to facilitate migration of approved OSU courses for distance delivery.

Extended Campus employs a standing committee to review proposals for the development of OSU courses for distance delivery. For consideration, a proposal must have been approved for submission by the appropriate academic Department Chair/Head. For funding to be awarded, the proposal must fulfill the following requirements:

- Course must be designed and delivered through the Blackboard course management system. Multimedia components (e.g., CD, DVD, IP Video) may be included in course design, as needed to meet specified learning objectives.
Instructor/content expert must work with the Ecampus course development team to design the course according to best practices in distance education and OSU accreditation standards.

Course will convert readily to distance delivery without excessive development cost.

Course has potential to generate at least 150 total SCH per year.

Department accepts responsibility for the curriculum and quality of instruction.

Instructor/content expert will follow course standards established in the Ecampus Instructor Manual.

Course will be available to all OSU students who meet prerequisites.

Instructor/content expert must demonstrate basic skills in computer use.

Department must give approval for on-going offerings of this course (minimum of 2 terms per year) and will assign competent instructors to this course or work with Ecampus to assign these instructors.

The following is also considered in addition to meeting the requirements specified above:

Course adds significant value to the distance delivery of existing Ecampus degrees, minors, licensure, graduate certificates, and other credit programs (Ecampus Degrees and Programs).

Course will meet critical program needs; provide new options, additional minors, Bacc Core, WIC, etc.

Course is required by degrees, certificates, or minors delineated in the existing MOUs with each College.

Course has potential for high enrollment to a defined audience.

Course or cluster of courses proposed will lead to a new degree or program within the next two academic years (plan for implementation must be presented with proposal for funding of courses and must have approval of College and department chair).

Course is an existing Ecampus offering in need of updating or revision.

If the proposal is accepted, the instructor then meets with the Ecampus Project Development and Training (PDT) team, which then facilitates the “migration” of the course for distance delivery. Ecampus will not accept a course that is not currently in the OSU catalog (i.e., the course cannot be under Category II consideration). If accepted for delivery through Ecampus, the course is developed for distance delivery in close collaboration with the instructor. A checklist (attached) is used to document that course quality and online course standards are met. When course development is complete, the Department Chair/Head is given the opportunity to review the course. Ecampus also
provides instructors and departments with a course assessment tool for their use in determining course effectiveness/quality after the course has been offered. A copy of that assessment tool, "Suggested elements for review of online instruction," is attached.

5. **Should e-campus courses have syllabi requirement stating how course outcomes are met; is reading a text book and taking an exam sufficient?**

Ecampus requires all course instructors to provide a "generic" syllabus that is posted in the Schedule of Classes. This is an abbreviated syllabus, which excludes time bound elements, such as test dates. Each course also has a fully developed syllabus posted in its Blackboard site that lists assignments, testing schedules, course outcomes, etc. Ecampus requests that instructors adhere to the guidelines for syllabi as stated by Curriculum Council and the Academic Programs office. We encourage the faculty to review their course syllabus each term to ensure its currency. Courses developed for delivery through Ecampus incorporate the same course outcomes defined by the instructor for the on-campus version of the course. As the content expert, it is the instructor's, and ultimately the College’s, responsibility to ensure this is the case. Courses offered through Ecampus are evaluated using the same tools and measures as on-campus courses.

6. **Concerns about equity issues in testing (e.g., chem. 121 e-campus and campus have non-parallel examination protocol).**

Chem 121 offered through Ecampus follows the same syllabus as on-campus, with the same number of exams and testing dates. We would be happy to address this further if the concerns can be more clearly elucidated.

7. **Concerns for the long term consequences relative to curricula; perceptions of alumni, stakeholders with respect to the overall quality of OSU academic programs. Do we have data about student’s success in e-campus courses?**

Ecampus courses and programs are in fact "owned" by the academic department. The maintenance of the program/course quality is the purview of the department. Nevertheless, Ecampus does continue to work with departments/instructors to ensure that distance delivery and academic standards are met and exceeded. In terms of student success, there are statistical indicators that are provided on a routine basis for review by the Provost’s Office: Here are just a few of those metrics:

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<tr>
<th>Ecampus Metrics</th>
<th>Actuals (AY/FY)</th>
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<th>Targets</th>
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<td>Program Inventory-Undergrad/Grad</td>
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<td>Undergraduate Degrees Awarded</td>
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<tr>
<td>Graduate Degrees Awarded</td>
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<td>2.964</td>
<td>3.19</td>
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<tr>
<td>% of U.S. Minority Students of Total College Enrollment</td>
<td>10.9%</td>
<td>11.6%</td>
<td>11.8%</td>
<td>12.7%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Satisfaction Rate per Course (%)</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>84.5%</td>
<td>82.6%</td>
<td>82.8%</td>
<td>84%</td>
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Finally, in response to the Subcommittee's Recommendations:

1. “E-campus/web based courses should have some documented approval process, perhaps a Cat II level approval.”

Ecampus does have a documented process for the online development of a campus course (see Checklist) and standards for online courses (see links below). A Category II approval process is not required or necessary. The course developed for online delivery follows the same catalog description and syllabus as for the on-campus course in terms of learning outcomes. Once the Council has approved the course for OSU, delivery via Ecampus online does not require additional approval. The course developed for online delivery is typically developed by the faculty/instructor that is offering the same course on-campus, and has department approval to do so. Regardless, all courses are designed and developed together and in alignment with the departments. The delivery method may differ, but the course is designed such that the same learning outcomes are obtained as for the on-campus version.

2. “Syllabi requirement list should include bullet identifying “compare and contrast course delivery format that is being proposed” for e-campus/web based campus course with on campus course, particularly for laboratory or other hands on course components.”

Each Ecampus course does have a fully developed syllabus provided by the course instructor. The course development process does use the on-campus syllabus as the basis for creating the online version, including course outcomes and course components that
are designed, in collaboration and approval by the faculty, for the distance student to meet the same learning objectives/outcomes as the on-campus course.

3. Consider requesting that existing e-campus courses with a wet laboratory or other hands on component listed in course description provide a description of how that aspect of the original on campus course is being managed as an e-campus course. This is currently being done in Chem 122, but is also done in other courses in the form of field work, and other "hands-on" exercises. The syllabi for these courses describe how these course components are incorporated.

Ecampus would be happy to provide more information along these lines. We also feel it will be best to go to the source for further answers. That is, we recommend that a few experienced faculty who teach distance courses be invited to meet with Curriculum Council, so that questions and concerns may be responded to directly.

Thank you for this opportunity to respond to the Subcommittee's summary. Ecampus would appreciate this message be entered into the Council's minutes for the record.

Best regards,
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http://ecampus.oregonstate.edu/faculty/manual/course-standards.htm

http://ecampus.oregonstate.edu/faculty/manual/syllabus.htm

http://ecampus.oregonstate.edu/faculty/rfpinstructions.htm