Faculty Senate Distance Education Committee  
November 14, 2006

DRAFT POLICY ON PROMOTION AND TENURE ISSUES

Note for committee: Additions are underlined. Deletions are marked with square brackets. Choices are within curly brackets.

1. Courses offered at a distance and courses offered face-to-face both contribute to the educational mission of the University and are given equal weight in promotion and tenure decisions.

2. When a faculty member teaches a distance education course, this assignment will be part of the job description and promotion dossier, unless the employee and the department jointly consent to another arrangement (such as so-called overloads).

3. Development and delivery of successful distance-education courses require special skills that will be credited in the promotion and tenure promotion process.

4. Development and delivery of face-to-face and distance versions of the same course can be is a substantial increase in workload over the development and delivery of a single version. The extra work involved in such dual-delivery courses will be reflected in the employee’s job description and promotion dossier.

5. When the development of a distance education course results in materials that serve as a de facto textbook1, these materials will be counted and evaluated during the promotion and tenure process as a form of “scholarship and creative activity,” with the same standards as a paper textbook. [much as a paper textbook is considered.]

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1Extended Campus and the Distance Education Committee are working toward procedures for peer-review of online textbooks.
Comments from the FS Promotion & Tenure committee from May 06, summarized by their chair

.... the group agreed with essentially all of the recommendations.

Specifically

1. E-campus and F2F are equivalent with respect to P&T.

2. E-campus courses should be part of a faculty member's PD

3. Develop and delivery require a special skill set that should be part of the P&T evaluation

4. Development and delivery of F2F and Distance versions of the same course represent a significant increase in work load compared to doing one or the other. This should be reflected in the PD. Note:: The specifics here are very complex and depend on the nature of the materials - for example the D&D of a course F2F and distance that is a lecture only course on - say - Geology of National Parks is easier than one that has a lab component that would require a substantially different teaching method in the distance format (e.g. a Biology course). Such arrangements need to be negotiated between the instructor and their chair before the fact - not back calculated by the departmental P&T committee years later.

5. Development of materials for distance course and application to scholarship and creative activity - this is extremely discipline specific. Once again - this is something that should be arranged and considered prior to undertaking the work - not something the candidate should try to dictate to their department. If a candidate approaches their department with the attitude "I am going to use this as Schol and Creat Activity" after the fact, it makes it appear that the candidate is padding their record. If, on the other hand, a faculty member wishes to pursue the area of distance education as a scholarly activity - it is more productive to get support up front and have it written as such into their position description. It can then be documented by peer reviewed publication, conference proceedings, books, etc.

In effect, the delivery, evaluation and reward for E-courses should be treated in as similar a way to F2F courses as possible. The premise is that faculty invest the same intellectual effort, resources and commitment to them. My experience suggests that to be the case. One sees the same variation in quality in E-campus as one sees in F2F course (there are good and bad in both).

Comments from members of the FS Faculty Status committee, May 2006

1. The policy seems fairly reasonable as written. Editing is needed in #3, "Developing and delivering successful..." Point #5 seems squishy. I guess such materials would be considered a de facto textbook to the same degree as detailed notes are prepared, packaged, and sold through
the OSU bookstore. It would be up to P&T committees and administrators to determine whether such materials should be considered as a form of scholarship and creative activity in the same way that it is sometimes difficult to determine whether educational materials developed by Extension faculty can be considered as such.

2. I think these are good guidelines. Points 1-3 seem great, and will safeguard faculty who choose to teach distance classes.

I don’t know if all distance ed. classes are web classes, or if there are still distance ed. classes that involve students attending an interactive video cast of the class. Combining a regular face-to-face class with a video cast class would be more work than a regular face-to-face class alone, but not a huge amount. Distance students are likely to need more individual attention, but the lectures, activities and tests are the same. For this type of distance ed. class, point 4 is fine or may slightly overstate the work involved. However, I think that point 4 may understate the work involved in developing a new web class. I have never created or taught a web class, but my guess is that putting a good one together is as much work as putting together a completely new course, even if the materials for a face-to-face version of the class have already been developed. “Substantial increase in workload” may not give sufficient credit for the development of new web classes. Once the web class has been developed, the increased work in a dual-delivery course would depend on the number of students in the distance component. “Substantial increase in workload” seems appropriate for this.

Scholarship and creative activities credit for materials that serve as a textbook seems very appropriate, as long as there is a good review processes, and that nature of the material is considered. To be fairly treated this way, the materials would need to be comparable in size and scope to a traditional textbook. Consideration of size and scope can probably be left to the discretion of promotion and tenure committees, but some sort of formal peer review process is a critical element.

3. As with most course development, it is the initial development that is the most time and energy-consuming. However, if it is the intent for the course(s) to be ongoing, something should be stated in the PD re: course 'maintenance' - the 'upkeep' of distance ed courses can be time-consuming.

4. I echo previous [above] comments regarding these guidelines. I think they are progressive and they make sense.

5. I agree with all the comments. To qualify for scholarship and creativity, a formal peer-review process may need to written in the guidelines.