March 12, 2014

Colleagues,

Online learning has changed the landscape of higher education over the past decade. Initial online efforts were limited to for-profit or primarily online universities, however the recent past has seen widespread adoption of online programs and courses at most public and many private universities. While MOOCs have captured the fascination of the popular and higher education press, several top-quality private universities have been expanding quietly their online offerings either directly or through consortia (for example, see http://2u.com/). Against this backdrop of change in higher education in the area of online education, a review of Seaver College's policies related to online learning was initiated in the 2013-2014 academic year.

To conduct this review of Seaver College's policies related to online courses, I have been working with an ad hoc group of faculty and IT professionals. The members of the ad hoc online learning committee are:

- Michael Feltner (chairperson)
- Rodney Honeycutt
- Michael Ditmore
- Joi Carr
- Robert Williams
- Chris Heard
- Kelle Keating

- Ben Postlethwaite
- Cyndia Clegg
- Andy Yuengert
- Gerry Flynn
- Alan Regan
- Hong Kha

This ad hoc group is composed of volunteer members from the Seaver Deans Office (Feltner) and Seaver Academic Council (Honeycutt, Ditmore & Carr), appointees based on recommendations from the Seaver Faculty Association (Williams, Heard, Keating & Postlethwaite), the past and current presidents of the Seaver Faculty Association (Clegg & Yuengert), and IT staff members with expertise in the area of online learning (Flynn, Regan & Kha).

The ad hoc group reviewed current Seaver College academic policy information related to online courses and read a great deal about online course trends, policies, best practices, etc. from a variety of sources. The sources include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Chronicle of Higher Education (www.chronicle.com)
- Inside Higher Education (www.insidehighered.com)
- Research briefs on online education published by the Educational Advisory Board
- Sloan Consortium publications and web site materials (http://sloanconsortium.org/)
- Educause (www.educause.edu)
- Babson Survey Research Group
- International Association for K-12 Online Learning
- New York Times (www.nytimes.com)

- University web sites, including:
  - Yale
  - Baylor
  - Calvin College
  - Occidental
  - Abilene Christian
  - Carleton College
  - Pomona College
  - U of San Diego
  - Cal State System
  - UC System
  - Penn State

Based upon review, the ad hoc committee made several recommendations related to the academic policies and practices of online courses at Seaver College. As the committee's recommendations are focused strictly on hybrid and online courses, it is important to note the following tenets before considering the committee's recommendations.

1. As stated in its mission, Seaver College places the total development of the student at the heart of its educational enterprise. As a primarily residential and undergraduate college, Seaver College affirms a significant relationship between the degree of individual student involvement in the life of the college and our success in effecting student development. For this reason, the vast majority of all courses offered at Seaver College are delivered in a traditional format to facilitate direct interaction between students and faculty. The recommendation to allow hybrid and online courses in the Seaver College curriculum is not intended to undermine the residential nature of the Seaver experience. Instead this recommendation is made to provide enhanced opportunities for student learning, where appropriate.
2. The decision to develop or offer hybrid and online courses is faculty decision. Through these recommendations, the College affirms the primary role of the faculty in matters of the curriculum by requiring review and approval of all hybrid or online courses by the Seaver Academic Council (SAC).
3. In recommending modifications to existing policies related to hybrid and online courses, Seaver College is neither promoting nor discouraging the development of these types of courses. If online or hybrid courses are to be offered, it is imperative that these courses be high quality and meet their stated learning outcomes. For this reason, recommendations regarding faculty training for teaching online or hybrid courses are proposed. Recommendations on the review and approval process are also offered.

The recommendations of the ad hoc committee were presented to SAC on February 3, 2014. At the SAC meeting, the recommendations were modified and are being disseminated to the Seaver College faculty and the Seaver Faculty Association (SFA) at https://sites.google.com/a/pepperdine.edu/seaver-online-learning/. On this web site, you will find five recommendations.

1. Recommendation 1 – Course Definitions
    This recommendation proposes definitions of traditional, hybrid and online courses.
2. Recommendation 2 – Academic Policies Related to Hybrid and Online Courses at Seaver College
    Recommendation 2 defines the maximum number of credit hours of hybrid or online courses that can act in fulfillment of the requirements for a bachelor's degree at Seaver College. The recommendation also proposes the removal of the current restriction on awarding transfer credit for online courses taken at other institutions after initial enrollment at Seaver College
3. Recommendation 3 – Transfer Policy for Hybrid and Online Courses
    This recommendation proposes that Seaver College accept online courses completed at regionally accredited colleges within seven years of the term of matriculation at Pepperdine for transfer credit.
4. Recommendation 4 – Review and Approval Process for Hybrid and Online courses at Seaver College
    Recommendation 4 proposes the review and approval process for hybrid and online courses. It also recommends the required training for faculty members proposing to teach online or hybrid courses.
5. Recommendation 5 – Additional Policies related to Hybrid and Online courses
    This recommendation articulates the proposed policies on workload calculations and intellectual property for hybrid and online courses.

Following a 30 day period for review and comment by the SFA and Seaver faculty (concluding April 20, 2014), the recommendations will be modified, if necessary, and formally submitted to the SAC for review and approval.

I invite your review and comment on this important topic.

Michael Feltner
Associate Dean
Seaver College