

**Policy 7.9 - Distance Education Faculty Competencies and Compensation
Feedback Summary Report**

Respectfully Submitted March 9, 2016

J.D. Salas, D.M.A.

Chair-Elect, Faculty Senate

Chair, Professional Welfare Committee

Executive Summary

The SFA Faculty Senate received 41 responses during the open review period regarding proposed revisions to Policy 7.9, Distance Education Faculty Competencies and Compensation. Included in this summary is the narrative feedback reported across six thematic categories, and alternatives to the proposed policy change. The thematic categories are: workload differences from face to face teaching, possible effects to online teaching, effects to faculty support of the strategic plan initiative, effects on faculty morale and culture, financial concerns, and Center for Teaching and Learning statements.

I. Narrative Feedback

A. WORKLOAD DIFFERENCE

- While face-to-face classes, have the benefit of staying current based in many cases by a professor simply changing or modifying their lectures and discussions to reflect current issues and scholarship, constantly modifying online material to achieve the same goals is much more time consuming
- While it is true that initial development and delivery take more skill and time than subsequent delivery, any quality online class will inherently take considerably more time for delivery than an equivalent quality face-to-face (F2F) class.
- The performance pressure associated with teaching traditional classes is more than offset by the increase in administrative issues. More time is spent in one-to-one sessions with students. Many times the equivalent of one class session per week is spent doing collaborate sessions. Collaborate sessions are more difficult and less rewarding than classroom teaching. The stipend is an affirmation that these efforts are appreciated and administration considers this a priority
- Interaction with and among students is extremely time consuming in an online

class.

- Questions are nearly always asked and answered individually.
- Because students' schedules vary, it is necessary to login to answer questions multiple times during the day, well into the evening, and on weekends.
- Multiple students can in theory participate in a chat room, but there are at least two difficulties:
 - It isn't possible to tell which "participants" are actually paying attention.
 - Online students have widely varying availability schedules, so it's difficult to get more than a few together at one time. The fact that their schedules vary is one of the main reasons that they take an online class!
- Discussions won't occur unless graded, and it isn't possible to tell who is paying attention without requiring and grading responses, including making sure that each response is in proper context to the initial post. Doing so is very time consuming.
- Group activities are most effective if monitored so the group can be nudged back when it gets off track. This is most effective if done multiple times during the day, well into the evening, and on weekends.
- To provide effective feedback, assignments must be downloaded, marked electronically, and uploaded, a process that is considerably more time consuming than marking a stack of papers.
- The university should be aware that instructors who teach online have to be very aware of copyright issues, accessibility for all levels of learners, and good practices for online delivery of material.
- Online grading of lengthy papers in detail takes considerably more time (either through GradeMark or Word annotation) than paper comments do. This extra time is needed to keep course offerings online equivalent to our traditional classroom sections. Other departments may have auto-grading courses, where the extra work is mostly in the setup or early revision phase: that is largely not the case in literature, composition, and technical writing courses.
- If teaching online courses did not take additional skill, then the University would not ensure that faculty participate in the online instructor certification program.
- The need to incorporate Principles of Good Practice as well as ADA conformance in online classes from their inception means that the online materials take longer to prepare. Obvious examples include captioning of videos or adding sound to slide presentations
- This policy revisions rests on a misunderstanding of the work involved in offering, as opposed to creating, an online course.

B. EFFECTS TO ONLINE TEACHING

- This change in policy harms those teaching online courses.
- This policy will offer less incentive for faculty members to offer online courses and will probably result in a reduction of sections offered. This policy will be a disincentive to engage in any further online activity by faculty who do not need to teach online.
- Faculty most likely to cut back are those who put the most effort into their online courses.
- This policy particularly impacts incentive to offer a summer course since that pay has already been substantially cut.
- If faculty are not compensated, then the number of students should **NOT** be allowed to go over 30. (Faculty have let these classes to go up in numbers because at least they felt compensated for all the extra grading that an online course generates.)
- This policy will result in stability in programs because faculty will refuse to teach those courses after three semesters. It will be difficult to maintain the quality of many of online courses.
- If the university seeks to reduce the availability of online courses, it has chosen a remarkably efficient means.
- This policy proposal is apt to have a negative effect on enrollments; where there is little incentive to create coursework and to devote as much time is required for training and course development, faculty simply are unlikely to elect to teach these courses.
- There are currently some online only programs that have no F2F counterpart. This policy will have a negative impact on those programs and will prevent any new online only programs from being created.
- The proposed three-semester delivery payments model will not solve this issue. It will only create other issues, such as course swapping among faculty.
- Many faculty will totally redo online courses to make the workload more manageable and consequently add to the issues of course quality.
- If faculty are disinclined to teach online, distance learning at SFA will be significantly affected, leading to unhappy students who will look elsewhere for online classes.

C. EFFECTS ON STRATEGIC PLAN INITIATIVE

- One of the pillars of the new strategic plan concerns improving our culture. I agree that this should be a priority but is a very difficult thing to do. Taking an action that is inconsistent with improving culture sends out a message that can destroy trust in the entire strategic plan process. It may not seem like much, but

it is consistent with a long history of decisions at this university (most recently reducing summer pay and increasing parking fees) Compensation is at the heart of our negative culture and this action is symbolic of a bigger problem. If administration is serious about changing our culture they need to send out positive and consistent signals. This is NOT a good start.

- If the goal of the university is to retain and attract high quality faculty, which is part of the strategic plan, then compensation for online work should not be clouded by ambiguous policy language, but straight forward language that clearly indicates the stipend amount faculty receive for delivery, creation, and redeveloping and updating online courses.

D. EFFECTS ON FACULTY MORALE & CULTURE

- New faculty members who earn a lower salary than most faculty at SFASU rely on the stipend for teaching online courses to maintain financial stability.
- This proposed revision to *Distance Education Faculty Competencies and Compensation* is highly flawed and in fact offensive to the faculty at SFA who take pride in teaching their online classes effectively.
- Many of online classes are taught by adjunct professors. Since adjunct pay per section is quite low, and has not been adjusted in recent memory, some adjuncts have come to see those stipends as one of the few programs that rewards growth and professional development. The reduction of the stipend will, for some of them, be a substantial reduction in pay. Substantial enough that it may be difficult to staff online courses and perhaps to retain some of our better adjunct faculty.
- This policy change as written will cause staffing, morale, and quality problems among our online instructors, and should not be adopted without a careful study of its impact.
- This policy does not improve the issue of online faculty resistance to teaching in a traditional setting when requested to do so by their supervisors. Those situations should be addressed through the supervisors simply directing the faculty member to teach what needs to be taught to best meet the needs of our students.
- The idea that stipend funds may be allocated to faculty development does not benefit adjuncts and lecturers who teach online. Many departments do not award faculty development funds to non-tenured faculty due to the limited amount of funding available.
- Faculty morale is already low on this campus. Faculty maintain high teaching loads, high service loads, and many do not have salary equity with comparable institutions across the state. For some, online teaching stipends lessen the blow of the low salaries provided by the institution. Even though steps are being taken to

improve faculty morale, those steps could take years to take implement.

- Taking away these stipends will only more negatively affect morale and feelings regarding salary equity and will further fan the flames of an atmosphere of distrust toward administrators.
- This proposal is demoralizing and will degrade the online education programs at SFASU. Rather than make things worse (because we do have online classes that are not up to standard, just as we have some on campus classes not up to standard), why not use this as an opportunity to improve the quality of online education. If SFA is going to remain competitive and grow, we must offer online options and the need to be quality online offerings.
- We are already one of the lowest paid university faculties in the state, and the stipend for online teaching makes a small difference in my ability to maintain a decent quality of life

E. FINANCIAL CONCERNS / QUESTIONS

- The stipends for teaching online courses come from student fees. Will the fees be reduced? If not, where will the money go? In the absence of the lack of explanation for the change and assuming the fees will not be reduced, faculty members are left to assume that this is simply a money grab.
- Students should **NOT** have to pay any additional fee (or at least a very small one instead of \$25 per credit hour) to take an online course.
- Online is especially hard in the summer with 5 week time frame and with faculty salaries taking a hit for several summers now, faculty can at least overcome some loss of pay because of getting extra for online courses.
- There is no mention of the amount of stipend for teaching an online course. Having it in writing assists those of us teaching these online courses to know the compensation for the effort we put forth in teaching online.
- Online courses at SFA generate additional funds through online course fees that are paid by students and are partially redistributed to faculty through the current stipend system. The university is also saving funds by not having to educate these students in a traditional setting by savings on utilities, parking, security, custodial services, etc. These savings come through the additional labor that online instructors must provide due to the demands of online teaching.
- Is it possible to see the budget of the extra fees that students pay for the online classes? If anyone should benefit from those funds, it should be the online faculty that works hard teaching, preparing, updating and learning new learning management systems.

F. CTL STATEMENTS

- The language indicating the CTL will have control over the online delivery methods or stipend process is disturbing since their “certification” course for being an “certified” online instruction has many flaws, is based upon old research, and does not reflect current effective instructional methods in online education. It is approximately 10 years behind what is being taught at other universities in Texas. The CTL should not have the power to recommend stipends or “assess the instructional design elements of a course for online delivery” per the language of the new policy.
- The Center for Teaching and Learning has a strict formula for construction standards that require balance between form and substance. No F2F instructor ever has his/her course content subjected to any structural scrutiny and has judgment called on it only in the most general terms. In addition, a semester-long course in online instruction is required by the CTL for acquisition of certification before the stipend is paid. As in CTL approval for course construction, no F2F instructor is required to ‘prove’ his capacity and acquire a special certification.

Alternative Policy Changes Submitted by Faculty

- If a class had no interaction beyond auto-graded assignments and answering email they receive \$5 per student.
To receive more than the minimum a class must be evaluated based on the semester prior to the evaluation. The professor would sit down with a representative from the Office of Instructional Technology and have an evaluation rubric completed and filed with the office and their department.
If a class were a Tier I = less than 20 points but with some interaction \$10 per student
If a class were a Tier 2 = 20 points but less than 30 points \$20 per student
If a class were a Tier 3 = 30 points or more \$30 per student

	Points				
	5	Graduate Class			
	5	Assessment Course			
	1	Discussions (with minimum word requirement (TBD))	Max 10		
	3	*Writing Assig w/Revisions (with minimum word req TBD)	Max 10		
	2	*Writing Assig Marked Graded	Max 10		
	2	Online Chats (recorded and made available)	Max 10		
	2	Presentations online	Max 10		
	1	Other interactions as approved by OIT	Max 10		

In this system you must have your class reassessed every 5 years (or sooner if you feel you can show more interaction) or you will drop back to the \$5 per student. Your class is assessed on what you did the previous semester, not what you say you will do the next semester. The first assessment would occur after the first time it is offered. The faculty member will have received the money for creating the class and the \$5 per student the first time it is offered. They can then go in for evaluation after teaching the class the first time. In each and every case it is the responsibility of the professor to schedule the evaluation meeting or they revert to the minimum.

- \$1500 stipend for the first three semesters for course development and maintenance
 - **per course not section**
- \$1000 online teaching stipend for each **semester** an online course is taught after the third semester
- **NOTE: this stipend is per semester not per class or section**
 - this will retain some incentive for teaching online and acknowledge that certain skills and training are required to maintain an online course.
 - CAP class size to a manageable number or provide overload stipend for larger classes (above 33 students).

Mandatory Review & Revision for all online courses every **three years** by department based on evaluations (course & department head). I suggest that

revisions be reviewed by a committee of online instructors in conjunction with the CTL. This can be split up into departments and on a rotation of courses to avoid overloading the review process.