Meeting of the Provost’s Open SUNY Advisory Committee
Meeting Minutes
Monday, May 12, 2014
Multiple Locations by Video
Albany, Buffalo, Syracuse, NYC

Attendees:

Deb Amory, Melanie Clay, Susan Deer, Martie Dixon, Christy Fogal, Kathleen Gradel, Carey Hatch, Fred Hildebrand, Karin Hilgersom, Lenore Horowitz, John McDonald, Ken O’Brien, Cyril Oberlander, Phillip Ortiz, Alexandra Pickett, James Pitarresi, Mike Rogers, Kim Scalzo, Anita Bleffert-Schmidt, Lisa Stephens, Patricia Thompson, Candace Vancko, Ed Warzala

I. The meeting began with a presentation from Mike Rogers and Melanie Clay from the University of Georgia System on their eCore program. Discussions around lessons learned from eCore included how financial models work in their system and how common course numbering is utilized.

In the late 1990’s the Georgia system decided they did not see value in having 30+ online English 101 instances, so they approved a “common core” of eCore courses by committee. Courses were developed with input from faculty from multiple institutions and these faculty then partnered with a programmer and an instructional designer to stand up the course ideas online. Some members of the
committee were concerned about implications of models like Georgia that have common course numbering implemented.

All students participating in eCore have a "home institution" where their financial aid and other elements are housed and managed. They currently have ~120 courses and ~5,000 enrollments per term. One difference between Georgia and SUNY systems is that all institutions in Georgia offer 4-year degrees, so they do not have community colleges the same way SUNY does in NYS.

All campuses can be part of eCore if they choose. The eCore model is structured so that they open a course section and when/if that section fills, they open another section; students are never turned away from a course section due to the way their model is structured. Tuition dollars for eCore courses are distributed with an equal share of ~40% to eCore administration and the campus housing the faculty teaching the course. The remaining 20% is given to the “home” institution of the student taking the course. The team at Georgia has found this model to be scalable in practice and that the cost share is a good one for those involved.

Retention was an issue when this program began, but by standing up a series of student supports, they have seen retention rise to 85% - 90%. Some of the supports include an "intrusive" advising system where faculty can identify at-risk students and multiple contacts are made with the student to keep them on track. Faculty training was implemented to help ensure more faculty understand how to help their students succeed online. All students go through a 10-minute online orientation with a quiz at the end to verify retention of the concepts for
success in an online course. Finally, the Georgia system has been using 8 and 15-week course formats and have found that retention increases in the 8 week format. Section size for a typical eCore course is ~30 students.

Members saw many opportunities in the Georgia model that could apply to what SUNY is looking to achieve with Open SUNY. There are some notable differences between the eCore model and Open SUNY; courses belong to a consortium rather than a single campus and there is one instance of their student information system that ensures uniform technology on the backend. eCore also uses common core model which is not something that has been done at SUNY and may not be effective or useful in the SUNY structure.

II. The second item of the agenda was a discussion of the powered by Open SUNY+ Wave II nomination process. An update was given on the number of program nominations received and expected total nominations. A member of the SUNY team outlined the timelines for nomination review, and additional members of the committee expressed interest in joining the review process. Nominations will be distributed electronically to reviewers on 05/17 (one day after the close of nominations) and must be completed before the qualitative feedback session planned for CIT on 05/27. After that session concludes, the Open SUNY executive team will take the scores and feedback and will select wave II partner programs with the SUNY Provost. The idea of taking all wave II nominations and turning those submissions into waves III, IV, V, etc., was discussed and members of the committee agreed that seemed to be a good approach and would save campuses the trouble of nominating programs multiple times.
III. The committee chair asked members if they would be willing to continue the work of this group throughout the summer and beyond. The membership was agreeable to the proposal and the group will continue their work throughout the summer. The full committee will meet once a month in June, July, and August and hopes to finalize sub-committee group reports and outline what the 2014-2015 academic year of the committee will focus on. Many members expressed feeling that this committee was a good use of their time and that their input has been reflected well in the development and implementation of Open SUNY.

IV. The meeting concluded with approval of minutes from the 04/22 meeting. Minutes were approved with no revisions. PLA and multi-campus programs sub-group reports will be discussed during the June meeting of the committee. Summer meeting dates will be decided and disseminated within a week.