

## **A Resolution for Maintaining Quality in Online and Hybrid Classes and Programs (18/6)**

**WHEREAS**, Regular faculty are responsible for reviewing and overseeing all courses and programs for excellence, regardless of mode of delivery; and

**WHEREAS**, Online and hybrid courses and programs represent a comparatively new form of delivery for which standards are evolving at a relatively rapid pace nationally, the highest quality of which are embodied in several of the university's online courses and programs;

**WHEREAS**, Within this overall scope, online courses and programs represent a significant part of GW curricular efforts; and

**WHEREAS**, In April 2016, the Faculty Senate Executive Committee created a Joint Task Force to (1) identify current participation in, and practices regarding approval and monitoring of online and hybrid degree courses and programs in GWU's schools, (2) identify best practices at top-tier universities including GW, and (3) file a report recommending processes for the review of such courses and programs; and

**WHEREAS**, At the February 9, 2018 meeting of the Faculty Senate, the Provost responded to the Joint Task Force Report, noting that "Remote education has become critical to our capacity to perform our mission. And, our remote educational programs are frequently teaching students in a way that is as good as our first-rate face-to-face programs. Likewise, the students in our online program have academic qualifications comparable to face-to-face students. The evidence is clear. GW is drawing top quality students into both its remote and face-to-face programs, and equally clearly, students are reflecting high levels of satisfaction with the quality of their GW education, regardless of the delivery modality", and

**WHEREAS**, The Provost further stated that "remote education is significantly more complicated to offer compared to face-to-face offerings" and that it is important that there is a "set of standards utilized university wide", that mechanisms are instituted to ensure that "monitoring is routinely done at the school level" and to make sure that online programs receive the same scrutiny that face-to-face programs receive in academic program reviews; and

**WHEREAS**, For many GW Faculty, particularly in schools which have not developed online or hybrid courses, "online" and "hybrid" courses are relatively new, and guidance regarding the establishment and maintenance of quality standards would be helpful; and

**WHEREAS**, After extensive deliberation with representatives from GW schools offering high-quality and online and hybrid degrees, in addition to the Chair of the Joint Task Force and the Provost, the Senate Educational Policy Committee sought to recommend a set of "best practices" drawn from the high quality standards set by these schools; and

**WHEREAS,** Quality Matters is a non-profit national organization widely recognized as providing the gold standard for best design practices and faculty peer evaluation of online/hybrid courses; and

**WHEREAS,** The Provost committed that:

1. The University will be asking all online programs to meet Quality Matters standards as a minimum;
2. All instructional designers who work on online/hybrid course development would be trained in the Quality Matters standards or the equivalent;
3. The University will offer Quality Matters seminars and training to faculty who are interested in having a firsthand understanding of the standards and their importance;
4. The Provost's office will update its recommended syllabus template and recommend that faculty teaching online courses include specifically-listed items in their syllabi;
5. The Provost expects schools and their units to take the lead in setting their own expectations regarding additional standards that one may impose;
6. The University will send a reminder to all academic leaders that they are responsible for the academic integrity of all of the programs that fall under them;
7. The University will clarify that academic program reviews need to include separate analyses for online/distance programs, even if the programs are the same;
8. All courses offered in distance format will electronically capture and retain for at least one semester the faculty lectures to assist the schools in teaching reviews; and

**WHEREAS,** Online and hybrid courses and programs are a significant and growing part of GW's teaching portfolio (particularly at the graduate and non-residential undergraduate levels); and

**WHEREAS,** The Provost's report underscored the importance of recognizing significant pedagogical differences (including different methods and techniques) in teaching online and hybrid courses compared with on-campus courses; and

**WHEREAS,** Article IX.A. of the Faculty Code states that "The regular faculty shares with the officers of administration the responsibility for effective operation of the departments and schools and the University as a whole"; and

**WHEREAS,** Article IX.A. of the Faculty Code requires that the regular faculty of a school or department have ". . . an active role in the development, revision, or elimination of curricular offerings of each department or school"; and

**WHEREAS,** The diversity of GWU's schools and colleges devolves much of the role of ensuring academic quality of online and hybrid courses on the faculty of individual schools and colleges,

**NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED BY THE FACULTY SENATE OF THE  
GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY**

- (1) That the Joint Task Force be discharged with appreciation for its work; and
- (2) That the Faculty Senate endorses the eight activities specified in the Provost's Report listed above; and
- (3) That the Faculty Senate commends the faculty and administrators of the several university online programs which ascribe to, set, and implement online standards of the highest quality, with particular commendation for their pioneering efforts in setting and maintaining nationwide quality standards; and
- (4) That the Faculty Senate formally thanks and acknowledges all those who dedicate their time and efforts to high quality design, development, teaching and support of online and hybrid courses and programs at GW; and
- (5) That the university provide appropriate levels of support for online/hybrid courses including but not limited to instructional design and development and regular seminars and training sessions for faculty to support their course development, regardless of delivery mode; and
- (6) That, consistent with the current practices of the university's several top-quality online programs:
  - a. Every online and hybrid course be reviewed by the regular faculty (or a designated subgroup) of the school offering the course in a comparable manner to the review of face-to-face courses within that school; and
  - b. End-of-course student feedback surveys be conducted for every course, including (for online and hybrid courses) a set of online-specific questions such as those recommended in the Provost's Report and additional items at the option of the instructor; and
  - c. Oversight and engagement for doctoral programs by regular faculty be commensurate for online and face-to-face courses and programs; and
- (7) That the university's Administrative Online Committee take an active role in reviewing implementation of the Provost's recommendations and other proposed policy improvements; and
- (8) That guidelines be developed for administrators seeking to classify courses as "online", "hybrid", "face-to-face" and "on-campus"; and
- (9) That the quality standards applicable to online and hybrid courses should also apply to instructors of face-to-face courses to the extent that they exceed those currently in effect for face-to-face courses, and to that end, the Provost should provide a report to the Educational Policy Committee on any improvements recommended in the quality standards applicable to face-to-face courses; and

- (10) That the Provost present an annual report to the Senate on University trends in face-to-face, online and hybrid education; and
- (11) The Senate requests the Educational Policy Committee to re-examine the issue of intellectual property protection for online courses and to report to the Senate any recommendations for new intellectual policy rules or agreements needed at the University level. In doing so, the Committee should continue its collaboration with the Provost's office, the deans, the Office of General Counsel, and other university stakeholders. Any new agreement should specify the rights and privileges of both the faculty member and the university; and
- (12) The Senate additionally requests the Educational Policy Committee, in collaboration with the Provost's office, the deans, and associated university stakeholders, to develop and present to the Senate a report, and if needed, recommendations regarding class sizes of online courses; and
- (13) The Senate additionally requests the Educational Policy Committee, having carefully examined online education at the university, to now undertake a similarly careful examination of the university's face-to-face courses and provide commensurate recommendations, in collaboration with the Provost's office, the deans, and associated university stakeholders.

Committee on Educational Policy  
February 9-16, 2018

Educational Policy Committee Chair Tasked with Negotiating Compromise Draft  
February 16-22, 2018

New Draft Proposed to the Faculty Senate Executive Committee  
February 23, 2018

Approved as amended by the Faculty Senate  
March 2, 2018