

Charge to Distance Learning Committee

The ad-hoc Distance Learning Committee (DLC) will 1) develop both a process and then policies to guide Cornell's participation in University consortia that deliver courses via electronic means; 2) design and oversee an administrative procedure to manage university-wide participation in any Cornell-designated MOOC consortia in academic year 2013-2014; and 3) prepare both interim and final reports to the Faculty Senate and the Provost. The committee's remit will end on December 1, 2013.

The committee will include 5-6 voting faculty members (including representation from non-technical fields) and several voting ex officio members (some perhaps drawn from staff) to provide expertise on academic technology, conflicts of interest and time, and pedagogy; a non-voting representative from the University Counsel's Office will be invited to attend. The committee will advise the Provost; the Dean of the University Faculty will nominate its members subject to the Provost's approval. At least two reports will be forthcoming: to propose short-term policies (especially on Cornell participation in MOOC consortia in academic year 2013-2014) and to begin the selection process, and a later, more comprehensive report. The final report will include a recommendation as to whether a more permanent committee should be established and, if so, a process for its future selection.

I. Develop policies and a process for ongoing policy revisions

The DLC will identify broad educational policy issues raised by the electronic delivery of Cornell courses, including issues of faculty direction, course quality, awarding of credit, criteria for selecting courses to be delivered electronically, faculty compensation and support, departmental and college involvement, effect of faculty participation on home-campus courses and education more broadly, and other issues as might be recognized by the committee. The report should discuss the goals for Cornell's participation in MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses) within the context of our university's overall educational mission. As part of its study and its reports, the DLC should summarize the perceived benefits and pitfalls, for both the University and individual faculty, of Cornell's participation in MOOCs. Although this committee's creation is prompted by the rapid growth of MOOCs since 2011, the committee should be conscious of other developments in distance learning, such that the policies are relevant in other contexts.

The DLC is charged with identifying policies for:

- Addressing the issue of ownership of courses and course materials for electronic distribution. This might also extend more generally to textbooks and the circumstances under which faculty might teach at other institutions of higher education.
- Creating a university-wide strategy for prioritizing course proposals
- Calling for course proposals, stating the application procedures and the selection criteria; this procedure should allow self-nomination, as well as nominations by others, to assure suitable coverage
- Judging those proposals, including selecting among them for delivering on Cornell's obligations/opportunities with outside consortia

- Developing a short and long-term assessment process, course-by-course and initiative-wide
- Sustaining quality and appropriate breadth among courses
- Maintaining quality among instructors
- Specifying how the policies will be administered

In its work, the DLC should take into account experience at Cornell with distance-learning courses (both for-credit and not-for-credit) created and delivered by various units at Cornell, including ILR, Cornell Cooperative Extension, and eCornell.

If necessary, the ad hoc DLC should appoint a DLC Selection Subcommittee (perhaps incorporating individuals from beyond the committee) for recruitment of proposals and selection of courses for academic year 2013-2014.

II. The DLC will design and oversee an administrative process to manage university-wide participation in any Cornell-designated MOOC consortia in academic year 2013-2014.

In preparation for the 2013-2014 academic year, the DLC will design and put into place an administrative process, focused especially on

- Scheduling and managing a selection process
- Calling for course proposals, stating the application procedures and the selection criteria; this procedure should allow self-nomination, as well as nominations by others, to assure suitable coverage
- Judging those proposals, including selecting among them for delivering on Cornell's obligations/opportunities with outside consortia
- Managing distribution of funding
- Creating and overseeing a full assessment process

Initially, for delivery through a MOOC consortium as early as Fall 2013, the committee or a subcommittee will likely need to act in the absence of firm policy guidance from the full committee or the Faculty Senate. But the structure of committee/subcommittee is intended to ensure that immediate, practical decisions are made with full knowledge of policy issues that are under discussion. In some cases, the subcommittee might choose specific options in order to test policy alternatives.

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