

The University Senate of Michigan Technological University

PROPOSAL 6-01

RECOMMENDATIONS ON DISTANCE LEARNING

The University Senate makes the following recommendations to the administration on the subject of Distance Education.

1. The University's program should be framed in terms of Distance Learning.

Definitions of *distance education* emphasize content delivery, technology, access, and a dual audience: traditional and non-traditional learners. In contrast, *distance learning* stresses the acquisition of knowledge and skills through mediated information and instruction. A program framed in terms of *learning* correlates with Michigan Tech's commitment to discovery-based learning. It also reflects the reality that technology-assisted learning will increasingly involve and blur distinctions between on- and off-campus students. Already, MTU's on-campus students are benefitting from course materials, teaching strategies, educational technologies, information resources, and diverse services that support distance learning.

2. The University should designate an upper-level administrative officer, such as a Dean of Distance Learning, who would do the following:

- articulate and communicate a DL mission congruent with the University's broader Mission;
- approve the original undertaking and renewal of DL initiatives;
- guarantee effective communication among DL stakeholders;
- expedite collaborative decision-making;
- assure the clear delineation of roles and responsibilities for University administration, faculty, colleges, schools, departments, support services, advisory committees, and corporate and other partners;
- establish and enforce unified DL policies, business practices, and quality control measures;
- communicate the University's IP policies and practices to faculty and staff; and
- establish channels whereby the concerns and questions of these groups would be conveyed to the administration.

The Director of Extended University Programs would report to this administrative officer.

3. Two permanent committees should be created: a Distance Learning Implementation Committee (DLIC), and a Distance Learning External Advisory Committee (DLEAC).

The DL administrative officer would establish these committees.

The DLIC would be comprised of the following members: the Director of Extended University Programs; the Director of Distance Learning-College of Engineering, and comparable future positions; the Director of Educational Technology Services; the Assistant Dean of Research and the Graduate School; a faculty member serving on the Senate Curricular Policy Committee; and three faculty members engaged in delivering distance learning. The latter three will be chosen by the University Senate and the service terms shall be staggered.

It is presumed that the membership and function of the committee will evolve in accordance with the maturation of the University's DL program.

The DLIC would work directly with the DL administrative officer, to whom it would recommend policy. In addition to recommending policy, the committee would facilitate the approval, coordination, development, implementation, and oversight of DL programs. It would do so by establishing DL processes and procedures; by such measures as assessing the implications of proposed programs for existing University infrastructure, resources, and services; and by coordinating communication among stakeholders. In the conduct of its duties, the committee would consult for advisement individuals and campus units such as the following: Office of Student Records and Registration, Admissions, Budget Office, J. Robert Van Pelt Library, Intellectual Properties, and individuals proposing a particular course or program.

The DLEAC would work closely with the DL administrative officer and DLIC. All colleges and schools would recommend representatives from outside the University to be members.

4. Campus-wide discussions concerning DL at Michigan Tech.

The campus-wide discussions will be facilitated by the DLIC, which will report regularly to the University Senate. Discussion should address issues such as University purpose and priorities in the DL arena; infrastructure and resource allocation; areas of responsibility; intellectual property and copyright; faculty incentives and rewards; and quality assurance.

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Became Senate Policy 404.1