

Adopted: February 19,2002

ACADEMIC SENATE  
Of  
CALIFORNIA POLYTECHNIC STATE UNIVERSITY  
San Luis Obispo, CA

AS-581-02/CC

RESOLUTION ON  
DISTANCE EDUCATION POLICY

- 1 WHEREAS, Distance education has become an accepted fonn ofteaching; and  
2  
3 WHEREAS, Some courses and programs at Cal Poly are using distance education as a teaching  
4 tool while Cal Poly has no approved distance education policy; and  
5  
6 WHEREAS, The Academic Senate Curriculum Committee and the Instructional Advisory  
7 Committee on Computing have approved the attached policy entitled *Distance*  
8 *Education Policy at Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo*; therefore, be it  
9  
10 RESOLVED: That the Academic Senate adopt the attached *Distance Education Policy at Cal*  
11 *Poly, San Luis Obispo* document.

Proposed by: Academic Senate  
Curriculum Committee and the  
Instructional Advisory Committee on  
Computing  
Date: October 22, 2001  
Revised: November 6, 2001  
Revised: January 15,2002  
Revised: February 19, 2002

## *Distance Education Policy at Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo*

### **Preamble**

This policy is designed to be a guide for those faculty who plan to use distance education (DE). Cal Poly will continue to encourage responsible innovation in teaching, embracing experimentation whose goal is to improve the quality of education. While Cal Poly should remain receptive to innovative forms of teaching such as distance education, the University must also ensure that there is proper oversight and review to uphold the standards of quality already established at Cal Poly. The basic principle is that best teaching/learning practices will drive the technology that will be considered and used in the curriculum. We must continually discuss and address the questions:

- How can information technology assist Cal Poly to gain/preserve what it most wants/needs in order to be true to its mission and identity?
- How can information technology help Cal Poly not lose what it most needs and wants?
- How can information technology strengthen Cal Poly's core institutional characteristics, such as: polytechnic, "learn by doing," undergraduate focus, teaching emphasis, residential, competitive admission, statewide service area, and graduates who are competent and employable on graduation?

At Cal Poly, we have placed considerable emphasis on securing up-to-date information technology for students and faculty. However, as I and Provost Paul Zingg have stated clearly on previous occasions, we embrace this technology primarily as a means to enhance teaching and learning on our campus. We want teachers and learners to have access to the burgeoning Internet resources, to be able to contact the library and other information sources 24 hours a day, and to be able to use the revolutionary software and Web products that serve as important educational tools. This technology is not intended to provide impetus that will transform Cal Poly into a "virtual university," offering a large number of courses on-line or through telecommunications networks to our core student body.

We should keep in mind, however, that these resources may offer opportunities to bring our special expertise to practicing professionals with continuing education needs and perhaps even enhance funding for our academic departments. At the same time it should be noted that any expansion in distance learning will be determined by faculty and departments, and this activity will not be allowed to impact the quality or kind of learning on which our reputation is based.

-Warren Baker, Outlook, April 1998

Yes, like the solo bowler, some of our students, out of choice or circumstance, will learn alone. The new information technologies increasingly available to them and us means that we can accommodate them more readily. I urge, though, that no matter which learners we serve or what technologies we employ, we explicitly aim to foster collaborative learning, social discourse, and other attributes of effective learning communities.

-Paul Zingg, "Learning Alone Should Not Mean Learning Apart"

## **Definition**

Technology Mediated Instruction (TMI) is defined by the Academic Senate of the California State University as "all forms of instruction that are enhanced by or utilize electronic and/or computer-based technology. It specifically includes distance education, instructional modules delivered via mass media, and computer assisted instruction" (AS-2321-96). This policy focuses on the Distance Education component of Technology Mediated Instruction, referred to here as DE, in which some students are geographically separated from the instructor while classes are being conducted.( See S and A Below)

### **Chancellor's Office Definitions for Academic Planning Data Base (APDB)**

- F* = Course section is conducted "*Face-fo-Face*," i.e., the students meet with an in-person instructor in a contained space setting.
- S* = Course is not conducted Face-to-Face, but it occurs at a regular scheduled time, e.g., a televised broadcast. Such a method of instruction is known as "*Synchronous*" mode.
- A* = Course is not conducted Face-to-Face and does not occur at a regularly scheduled time, e.g., student self-pace instructional material accessed via the web. Such a method of instruction is known as "*Asynchronous*" mode.

## **Applicability**

This policy shall apply to all new and existing credit-bearing courses and programs offered using DE by Cal Poly, including those offered through the Open University. (Open University is a part of the Department of Extended Education at Cal Poly through which members of the community can register for Cal Poly courses on a space available basis. This is a non-degree registration option.) Whenever a department or faculty group proposes to initiate a degree program in which more than half of the units are offered through distance, approval in advance from the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) is required under the latter's Substantive Change Policy. In addition, a department or faculty group is expected to address, in its self-studies and/or proposals for institutional change, the following policy guidelines.. The manner in which it does so will be reviewed by the University and perhaps by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC)\*.

\* WASC has developed guidelines for distance education. The guidelines are an extension of the Principles developed by the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education. The language used in the WASC guidelines set forth as of 3/8/00 has been incorporated into this policy, when deemed appropriate, but has been adapted to reflect conditions at this University. For the text of the WASC guidelines, please refer to the WASC website at <http://www.wascweb.org/senior/guide/>.

### **Instructional Methods and Academic Responsibility**

Cal Poly faculty have final responsibility for determining the pedagogies and instructional methods most appropriate for the instructional modules, courses, and/or academic programs which the University offers. Among the factors to be considered in determining the suitability of a particular course for DE are the following: (a) Can it be demonstrated that the use of DE--in enhancing teaching effectiveness, achieving the desired learning outcomes, suiting students' different learning styles, or increasing student access to education--produces a course that is at least equivalent in quality to curricular offerings currently approved at Cal Poly? (b) Does sufficient student demand exist? (c) Are the necessary instructional and student support resources available to facilitate the use of DE, e.g., access to advising and information sources, information technology infrastructure, etc.?

### **Quality**

While the University prizes academic freedom and wishes to encourage innovation in instruction, the faculty also have a collective responsibility to ensure the academic quality and integrity of the University's courses, programs, and degrees. This responsibility extends to those courses and programs offered using DE. The quality of instructional modules, courses, and academic programs delivered by or using DE must be at least equivalent to the quality of curricular offerings currently approved at Cal Poly. The purposes of DE are to increase the quality of instruction and to increase the access of students to faculty, to educational resources, and to each other. For example, there may be only one expert on a particular subject in the system, and technology can make her available to all CSU students. If DE results in increased class sizes or student-faculty ratios beyond traditional classroom and curricular standards, additional resources or workload adjustments necessary to maintain the quality of instruction must be provided in accordance with established collective bargaining agreements. In some cases, DE may offer the opportunity for cost savings, increased student access, or other benefits. While these are laudable, care should be taken to ensure that these advantages do not come at the expense of quality education.

### **Assessment**

Criteria for assessing the quality of technology-mediated instruction shall be developed by the academic units from which the instruction originates. DE courses, sections, and programs shall be held to the same standards as traditional classroom instruction when reviewed by department, college, university curriculum, and program review committees.

Any new course that includes, or any existing course being changed to include, a DE component that will replace 33% or more of face-to-face time shall have this indicated on the Course Description form to be reviewed by the curriculum committees as part of the regular curriculum review process. (Face-to-face time is defined as interaction between the instructor and the students, with the instructor present in the same classroom at the same time as the students.) Program Review committees shall evaluate the educational effectiveness of DE programs (including assessments of student-based learning outcomes, student retention, and student satisfaction), and when appropriate, determine comparability to campus-based programs. This process shall also be used to assure the conformity of DE courses and programs to prevailing quality standards in the field of distance and distributed education. DE courses and programs shall be consistent with the educational missions and strategic plans of the Department, College, and University.

### **Curriculum and Instruction**

Each course or program using DE shall provide the opportunity for substantial, personal, and timely interactions between faculty and students, and among students. Interactions may be face-to-face, or via synchronous or asynchronous e-mail or other means.

Tenured or probationary faculty shall direct any culminating experience or capstone of a DE program.

Cal Poly faculty assume responsibility for and exercise oversight over DE courses and programs, ensuring both their rigor and their quality of instruction. This includes:

Ensuring that standards consistent with established University policies and collective bargaining agreements are followed in setting workloads and procedures.

Selecting and evaluating the faculty who create the courses.

Maintaining approximately the same ratio of tenured/probationary faculty to adjunct/part-time faculty in DE programs as in campus-based programs.

Ensuring that the technology used suits the nature and objectives of the courses and program.

Ensuring the currency of materials, courses, and program.

Ensuring the integrity of student work and the credibility of the degrees and credits the University awards. It is the responsibility of the faculty to ensure that reasonable safeguards are in place to prevent academic dishonesty.

## **Contracting**

The University shall not agree in a contract with any private or public entity to deliver or receive DE courses or programs for academic credit, or not for credit, without the prior approval of the relevant department and college. Ideally, the impetus for such a contract should originate with the Cal Poly faculty, who would decide whether there is an instructional need and how best to fill it.

## **Intellectual Property Rights**

Ownership of materials, faculty compensation, copyright issues, and the use of revenue derived from the creation and production of software, telecourses, or other media products shall be agreed upon by the faculty and the University prior to the initial offering of a DE course or program, in accordance with established CSU and Cal Poly policies and collective bargaining agreement.

## **Resources**

Students shall have adequate access to library resources, and to laboratories, facilities, and equipment appropriate to the DE courses and programs. Students shall have adequate access to the range of student services appropriate to support DE courses and programs, including admissions, financial aid, academic advising, delivery of course materials, and placement and counseling. Students shall be provided with technical advice on how to solve hardware and software problems, and with an adequate means for resolving student complaints.

The University shall offer appropriate training and support services to faculty who teach DE courses and programs through professional development programs, technical support programs, equipment acquisition, library resources, staff resources and development, and the construction of appropriate instructional facilities.

Forms of technology-mediated instruction frequently rely on technology infrastructure (computers, networks, help desk, etc.) that may not be employed in current course delivery at Cal Poly. Therefore, development of an appropriate infrastructure to support DE is a basic university responsibility prior to offering the courses. Needs for enhancement in areas such as access to library resources, information technology, instructional design and technical support, faculty development in the use of DE, computer and network support, and student services should be identified at the department, college, and university levels. Cross-unit and cross-institutional sharing of learning and resources should be encouraged.

Any DE course or program must receive resource approval from the respective college deans) prior to commencing operation; faculty need to make certain they identify their intention and needs with sufficient lead-time to allow administrative units to evaluate whether appropriate infrastructure exists or can be in place prior to the DE offerings.

**Admissions**

Admissions criteria shall be comparable for students on and off campus. Agencies providing funding for DE courses or programs shall not acquire any privileges regarding the admission standards, academic continuation standards, or degree requirements for students or faculty.

**Truth in Advertising**

Faculty and students have a right to know the modes of delivery and technological requirements of each course, program, and degree offered by the University. At a minimum, this information will be indicated for DE courses in the schedule booklet each quarter.

**Impact on Faculty Personnel Decisions**

Faculty personnel decisions (hiring, retention, tenure, promotion, and post-tenure review) should value and reward course and curriculum development and professional development activities that result in improved instruction. However, no ranking of instructional methodologies or modes of delivery is to be used as a basis for personnel decisions. The role and value of DE should be made explicit in the personnel policies of departments and colleges.

**Final Note**

Technology mediated instruction is an optional mode of instruction. Nothing in this policy shall imply that DE is a preferred or required mode of instruction.

Implementation of this policy must comply with existing campus policies and collective bargaining agreements where applicable, e.g., workload and faculty rights.

## Margaret R. Camuso

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**From:** Unny Menon  
**Sent:** Thursday, May 09, 2002 2:48 PM  
**To:** Unny Menon  
**Cc:** Mary K. Fiala; David Conn; Joseph E. Grimes; Jerry J. Hanley; Bonnie I. Long; Valene B. Mathews; Susan Mundahl; Paul J. Zingg  
**Subject:** Response to AS Resolution AS-581-02/CC

On May 1, 2002, President Warren J. Baker responded, via memQrandum, to Academic Senate Resolution AS-581-02/CC, Resolution on Distance Education Policy.

I have attached the President's response in its entirety as a Word document; however, I am also providing the text of the memorandum below for those who have e-mail systems that do not handle attachments.

If you have any questions, please call.

Mary K. Fiala  
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President Warren J. Baker's response of May 1, 2002, to Academic Senate Resolution AS-581-02/CC, Resolution on Distance Education Policy:

"I am pleased to approve the above-entitled Academic Senate resolution, based upon the extensive review and consultation this important topic and innovative form of teaching has received during this academic year. Please convey my appreciation to the Academic Senate, as well as the Curriculum Committee, for its good work in this regard. By copy of this memo to both Jerry Hanley and Joe Grimes, I asked them to also convey my appreciation to the Instructional Advisory Committee on Computing for its consultation and assistance in developing this important campus policy."



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