

## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Teaching and Learning Program Council

**FROM:** Steering Committee

**RE:** Review of the approval of blended and online courses

**DATE:** March 1, 2017

### **Background:**

The current approval process for blended and online format courses is a process adopted for our piloting of these courses, and this has not been considered through the governance process. We have now used this process for several years. Last year TLPC reviewed this process and forwarded to Steering a proposed process for preparing to offer an online or blended course.

In the attached memo dated February 10, 2017, the Faculty Senate Executive Board requests consideration of the appropriate process for course approval for courses which are to be offered in alternate formats. The Executive Board notes that this has been studied by two Faculty Senate committees as well as by an ad hoc group convened by Steering and that all three groups recommended that the course approval process take course formats into account.

### **Charge:**

Steering asks TLPC to review the current steps to offering an online or blended course to confirm that the proposal shared a year ago in its recommendation for Steering and CAP concerning this procedure or to update this as desired.

At Step 1, if it has not already done so, TLPC should review the reports from the Senate committees and the ad hoc committee and the current approval process for blended and online courses. In addition, if it has not already done so, TLPC should seek testimony from chairs of the three committees providing the reports, faculty who have gone through the blended/online training process, Academic Leaders, and the Council of Deans.

Once TLPC has completed testimony gathering it may prepare a new preliminary recommendation or resubmit last year's recommendation for consideration by Steering and CAP.

### **Timeline:**

TLPC should complete its work by the end of Spring 2017.

### **TCNJ Governance Processes**

**Step #1 -- Identifying and reporting the problem:** When a Standing Committee receives a charge from the Steering Committee, the first responsibility is to clearly articulate and report the problem to the campus community. The problem may have been set out clearly in the charge

received from the Steering Committee, or it may be necessary for the Standing Committee to frame a problem statement. The problem statement should indicate the difficulties or uncertainties that need to be addressed through new or revised policy, procedure, or program. The problem statement should be broadly stated and should include a context such as existing policy or practice. Problem statements may include solution parameters but should not suggest any specific solutions. Clearly stated problems will lead to better recommendations.

**Step #2 -- Preparing a preliminary recommendation:** Once the campus community has received the problem statement, committees can begin to collect data needed to make a preliminary recommendation. Committees should receive input from affected individuals and all relevant stakeholder groups prior to making a preliminary recommendation. For issues that have broad implications or that affect a large number of individuals, initial testimony should be solicited from the campus community at large. For some issues, sufficient initial testimony may come from input through committee membership or solicitation from targeted constituent groups. When, in the best judgment of the committee, adequate clarity of the principles contributing to the problem are known, a preliminary recommendation should be drafted and disseminated to the campus community through regular updates and the Governance website. At this point, committees typically receive input or testimony through committee membership, formal testimony, and open comment from affected individuals and all stakeholder groups. Committees must be proactive in inviting stakeholder groups (including Student Government, Staff Senate and Faculty Senate) to provide formal testimony. In cases where testimony results in significant and substantive changes to the preliminary recommendation, the new recommendation will be considered to be in step #2.

**Step #3 -- Making a final recommendation:** Committees must use sound judgment to give the campus adequate time to review the preliminary recommendation before making their final recommendation. Again, committees are expected to be proactive in receiving feedback on the preliminary recommendation. If a full calendar year has passed since the formal announcement of the preliminary recommendation, the committee must resubmit a preliminary recommendation to the campus community. When, in the best judgment of the committee, the campus community has responded to the proposed resolution of the issue, the committee shall send its final recommendation (with documentation) to the Steering Committee. That final recommendation should include a suggested implementation date. Accompanying the final recommendation shall be a report of how testimony was gathered, the nature of that testimony, and how the Committee responded to that testimony, including a description of how the preliminary recommendation evolved as a result of testimony.

### **Testimony**

The presenting of testimony, prior to both the preliminary and final recommendations, is central to the concept of shared governance. All stakeholder groups will have an opportunity to provide input into governance issues through direct membership as well as invited testimony. Individuals appointed or elected to the governance system are expected to take a broad institutional perspective relative to issues being considered. In contrast, invited testimony will reflect the stakeholder perspective on the issue being considered. Committees are expected to be proactive in inviting stakeholder groups to provide testimony at both steps # 2 and #3 of the process. Committees need to identify stakeholder groups that are interested in each particular issue and invite their testimony at scheduled Committee meetings or hearings. Committees

should report in their transmittal memos which groups were targeted as stakeholders, how testimony was invited, the form of the testimony (written, oral, etc.), and the substantive content of the testimony.

To see the Steering Committee's guidelines for gathering testimony and making a final recommendation, see the "Governance Toolbox" at <http://academicaffairs.pages.tcnj.edu/college-governance/a-governance-toolbox/>

**To:** Steering Committee

**From:** Faculty Senate Executive Board (SEB)

**Re:** Course Approval Processes for Non-traditional Courses

**Date:** February 10, 2016

In addition to the traditional 15-week fall and spring semesters, the College also offers courses during truncated Winter and Summer I sessions and during shortened Summer II and III sessions. In recent years, faculty have also begun offering instruction in Blended and completely on-line formats as well. The current Course Approval process does not take these alternative modalities (shortened time frame or instruction mode) into account. In the absence of a college-wide policy, ad hoc practices have been adopted. At least three groups (two convened by the Faculty Senate and one by the Steering Committee) have considered non-traditional courses and instruction and each has recommended that the College develop course approval processes that consider these factors. We therefore request that Steering ask the appropriate governance committee consider this issue and offer recommendations regarding course approval policies for non-traditional offerings.