Ad-hoc Distance Education (DE) Committee
Academic Senate Meeting Report – March 18, 2016
Submitted by Leanne Urasaki, Chair

Responding to feedback received from online faculty, the committee has focused its work this academic year on updating its evaluation tools for peer evaluation of online classes. Aiming to address concerns that the previous draft evaluation rubric developed by a previous Ad-hoc Distance Education Committee and maintained by ITSO (Instructional Technology Support Office) in 2012 focused too much on the build of an online course, and not enough on the teaching of the course, and also that it was too comprehensive and daunting to complete, the committee extensively researched evaluations developed at other colleges to see how they had managed online course evaluation.

After investigating best practices examples from leaders in online teaching, the committee recognized that the current rubric, while needing some revision to eliminate redundancies and to weigh various elements of the rubric in ways relative to their value to student learning, is like many other national models used to evaluate the course build. However, many who had used this tool for evaluation recognized that certain classes that met the standards of the rubric could improve in ways not addressed in the rubric, including the quality of the teacher’s attentiveness and effectiveness in teaching the online class. A second tool that would focus more on the teaching of the online course was sought.

The committee spent most of the fall semester doing research into tools being used at other institutions before selecting one to use as a model. In January, the committee drafted the tool, which was then tested within the committee and revised based on the committee’s experiences—both using the tool as an evaluator and as the evaluatee.

The committee does have concerns that this tool has a limited focus, and that a course could have a positive evaluation in spite of a weak or deficient structure/build. However, the committee recognizes that this is just one piece of a larger framework to ensure the quality of our online courses.

This larger framework includes the digital credentialing (badging) system of professional development that was outlined by the committee in Spring 2015 and is now being developed by ITSO with hopes for a fall 2016 launch. This system will provide faculty with training, validate skills, and provide department/division chairs with a clear understanding of a faculty member’s readiness and ability to develop and teach on online class.

The committee would like to share the tool with the Senate, still in draft form, and ask for volunteers to further test the tool. The committee is seeking both faculty willing to have their course(s) evaluated, and for faculty willing to be peer evaluators. All faculty, even those with no experience teaching online are encouraged to volunteer as peer evaluators. The committee would like to make this tool as user-friendly as possible, so all feedback is welcomed. Also, to
increase the number of courses available for evaluation, we plan to ask lecturers teaching online if they would be willing to have their courses evaluated to help test the tool.