

MINUTES
STATE UNIVERSITY SYSTEM OF FLORIDA
BOARD OF GOVERNORS
INNOVATION AND ONLINE COMMITTEE
UNIVERSITY OF NORTH FLORIDA
JACKSONVILLE, FLORIDA
JANUARY 22, 2015

1. Call to Order

Chair Ned Lautenbach convened the meeting at 8:29 a.m. on January 22, 2015, with the following members present and answering roll call: Vice Chair Edward Morton; Richard Beard; Dean Colson; Tom Kuntz; Wendy Link; Katherine Robinson; and Norman Tripp. A quorum was established.

2. Opening Remarks

Chair Lautenbach provided an update for two of the committee's initiatives: strategic planning and a common learning management system. He stated that a task force was created for strategic planning for online education and is being chaired by President Hitt from the University of Central Florida. This task force has met twice and plans to complete its work by the end of the year. He reminded the committee that the task force has a webpage on the Board of Governors website to track progress. He explained that the task force is focusing on access, quality, and cost, and will set strategic metrics that will be critical for long-term success.

Chair Lautenbach stated that staff is continuing to research possibilities and the parameters of the Board's procurement regulations, as possible approaches are explored and opportunities are considered for a common LMS. He indicated that he hopes to have a work plan in February to address this effort.

3. Approval of the Committee Minutes

Governor Morton moved that the Committee approve the minutes of the meeting held on November 6, 2014, as presented. Governor Link seconded the motion, and the members concurred.

4. Costs of Online Learning: Complete Florida Degree Initiative

Chair Lautenbach recognized Dr. Pam Northrup, head of the Complete Florida program at the University of West Florida, to give two presentations. He explained that the Complete Florida Degree Program was statutorily required to submit a report on cost components of distance education to the Board of Governors Chancellor and the

Chancellor of the Florida College System. Statutes then required both Chancellors to submit their report on differential tuition and fees to the Legislature.

Dr. Northrup explained that Complete Florida is a program that is legislatively funded to support adult learners with some college credit, but no degree, to help them complete a degree. This program is provided through a partnership of eleven institutions, four of which are in the State University System.

Dr. Northrup explained that distance learning courses are defined in Florida as courses in which at least 80 percent of the direct instruction of the course is delivered using some form of technology, where the student and instructor are separated by time or space. The distance learning fee may not exceed the additional costs of the services provided which are attributable to the development and delivery of the distance learning course.

She said that Complete Florida institutions identified applicable cost components as Direct Instruction, Other Direct Salaries, Other Direct Expenses, Technology and Infrastructure, Support Services and Other. She explained the cost levers in each of these components and said that the report also reflects national approaches to differentiating tuition and fees for fully online programs.

Dr. Northrup said the Complete Florida report includes recommendations to the Chancellors of both delivery systems. The first recommendation was to develop a Complete Florida rate for programs that may include reduction of specific fees for fully online students, but continue to assess the distance learning fee.

The second recommendation was to look at a fixed cost assessment for competency-based programs, and the third recommendation was to develop a Complete Florida shared program rate.

Dr. Northrup said costs were variable and some institutions used the full distance learning fee to support their distance learning unit, while others used the fee to also support other services, such as libraries and help desk services. The Legislature wants to identify the true cost of online distance learning, but she said the different strategies used by each institution made it difficult to uncover a one-size-fits-all solution. To respond to the Legislature's question, she said that more work needs to be done. She explained that when institutions were given the authority to charge a distance learning fee in 2009, there was a report that identified several ways the fee could be used.

Governor Morton said the image and message sent to people should establish the strength and importance of the degree and the brand, so that price does not become the determinant for students when selecting an institution to attend.

5. Costs of Online Learning: Chancellors Criser and Hanna's Joint Recommendations

Chancellor Criser framed the letter he and Chancellor Hanna sent to the Legislature by referencing the recommendations in the Complete Florida report. Regarding the development of a Complete Florida rate for totally online students, he observed that there may be fees for services which students who live 100 miles from campus may not be able to avail themselves, but students who live two blocks from campus could. He said there is great diversity in terms of institutions that have implemented distance learning fees and those that have maintained their other fees, and the transition to a different approach will be complicated. He said that if an institution is not charging a distance learning fee and seeks to add the fee, then, without a reduction in other fees, it might be viewed as an additional fee or a fee increase. He suggested that the Board work closely with universities and colleges in understanding and implementing this recommendation, because there is not a one-size-fits-all model.

Chancellor Criser said the fixed-price competency-based program discussion is essentially the same as the block tuition discussion. He said that when students transition from a traditional fee structure to a block fee structure, some people pay more and some pay less. This may be an opportunity to explore this concept for students who want to avail themselves of it in an area where it currently is not being offered.

With regard to the shared program rate for Complete Florida, Chancellor Criser suggested thinking through how to access nationally renowned talent through a platform across the system and possibly colleges, leveraging it as a center of excellence, rather than having that talent available at only one institution and replicating the content around the state. He explained that this is an opportunity because Complete Florida institutions have been collaborating on how to package courses to help towards degree completion.

He noted that there is another model in Florida, the UF Online program, which has a dictated tuition and fee structure and receives additional state support.

Chancellor Criser said he expects continued conversation on this matter; none of it is simple.

Chair Lautenbach requested that the committee be kept apprised on these recommendations as they move forward.

6. Competency Based Education

Dr. Pam Northrup presented on competency based education and what it means for Florida.

She said that adults in the workforce feel that they already have great skills in businesses and want the ability to test out, be flexible, start when they are ready, and have support towards completion as they focus on career goals. Generally, students who are participating in these programs can progress through objectives and demonstrate what they know at their own pace.

She said that institutions deciding to offer competency-based education will need to address technology and infrastructure issues; develop policies for calculating tuition, faculty load, and prior learning assessment; engage faculty in the conversation from the very beginning; and provide training and support for faculty.

7. Concluding Remarks and Adjournment

Chair Lautenbach adjourned the meeting at 9:15 a.m.

Ned Lautenbach, Chair

Nancy C. McKee, Ph.D.
Associate Vice Chancellor