

**State University
System of Florida**

**Strategic Planning
Committee
Workshop**

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Policy Issues With Respect To On-line Learning

“No Significant Difference,” or Not?

Foci of Policy -- Processes

Finance

Quality Assurance/Accountability

Support of Innovation

Institutional Vitality

Foci of Policy -- Goals

- High quality educational opportunities for citizens of Florida
 - Accessible educational opportunities for citizens of Florida
 - Workforce relevant educational opportunities for citizens of Florida
 - Cost effective educational opportunities for citizens of Florida
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- Serve the World
 - Profit Center

Foci of Policy -- Processes

Finance

Quality Assurance/Accountability

Support of Innovation

Institutional Vitality

Foci of Policy -- Approaches

Benign

(Whatever)

Directive

(Do it, my way)

Supportive

(Just do it)

Focus of Policy -- Finance

- The essence of finance policy
 - Balancing **public good** and **private benefit**
 - Translation: Balance **Appropriations, Tuition, and Financial Aid – ATFA**

Finance Policy And On-Line Learning

- The Supply Side – Institutional Support
 1. Pay for Desired Activities -- ***Directive***
 - Creates activities that generate resources (Special Programs, Student Support Services, Whatever “You tell them to do”)
 - Sacrifice nimbleness and institutional innovation
 - Reinforces incremental change, directed from outside the institution

Finance Policy And On-Line Learning

2. Pay for Desired Outcomes -- ***Supportive***

- Reduces costs per desired outcome
- Can't count on results
- Beware of what you ask for
 - Improved completion – key to on-line success
 - Reduced equity – already an issue in on-line

Finance Policy and On-line Learning

- The Demand Side – Tuition and Financial Aid
- Three general strategies in play today
 - 1) Shared Benefits/Shared Costs – ***Benign***
 - 2) Students Benefit/Students Pay—***Directive (I think)***
 - 3) Forced cost effectiveness – ***Supportive (I think)***

Finance Policy and On-line Learning

1. Shared benefit/shared cost – Public Good and Private Return on Investment (ROI)
 - Pretty much current funding structure -- treating on-line and technology mediated the same as standard classroom instruction
 - Most research suggests students are relatively insensitive to price (within reason)
 - Not a change strategy
 - But not necessarily bad

Finance Policy and On-line Learning

2. Student Is The Principal Beneficiary – Student Should Pay

- Charge what the market will bare
- Impact as significant on institution as on student
 - Not high price elasticity of demand for most students
- Need-based aid essential with this strategy
 - Price does matter to low-income students

Finance Policy and On-line Learning

3. Forced “Cost-effectiveness” -- Use Pricing of On-line learning to drive the cost curve down
 - The New Rave – massification through MOOCs
 - Competency based instruction and Prior Learning Assessment
 - Providing “best in show” courses and programs
 - Incentivizes students to chose a less expensive option
 - May work for adult students more than traditional
 - May work for courses rather than degrees
 - Could Incentivize institutions to adopt more use of technology and partner more

Quality Assurance and Accountability Regarding On-line Learning

- The ***essence of accountability policy***
 - Are ***students and society*** receiving appropriate value
 - Are ***institutions and the State*** accountable
- Two current thrusts
 - Student Learning
 - Student Completion

Quality Assurance and Accountability Regarding On-line Learning

- ***Student Learning Outcomes***
 - Not an issue with traditional learning strategies
 - A big issue with respect to on-line and technology mediated learning
 - Does it work?
 - On-line Learning -- “no significant difference”
 - Technology Mediated Learning – can be better
 - How do you incentivize it?
 - Clayton Christensen’s ***Disruptive Innovation*** Thesis
 - Change can’t happen in the center
 - Change doesn’t do better; but does good enough

Quality Assurance and Accountability Regarding On-line Learning

- ***Student Learning Outcomes -- Four approaches***
 1. Disregard Quality, just like today -- ***Benign***
 2. Require institutionally developed quality assurance assessments, with public reporting – ***More Supportive than Directive***
 3. Require institutional adoption of externally developed assessments, with public reporting -- ***More Directive than Supportive***
 4. Require standard assessment of quality of all on-line learning -- ***Directive***

Quality Assurance and Accountability Regarding On-line Learning

- With respect to ***Student Learning Outcomes***
 1. ***Disregard Quality, just like today***
 - Incentivizes the status quo
 - Eliminates the capacity to assure quality in a changing environment, and
 - legitimizing or de-legitimizing new approaches in a fact-free environment
 2. ***Require institutionally developed quality assurance assessments, with public reporting***
 - Incentivizes faculty based quality assurance process, akin to requirements of accreditation
 - Sacrifices any capacity for comparability and raises issues of face validity

Quality Assurance and Accountability Regarding On-line Learning

3. *Require institutional adoption of externally developed assessments, with public reporting*

- Incentivizes faculty engagement in selection of quality assurance process, but enhances external validity and possible comparability of assessments

4. *Require standard assessment of quality of all on-line learning*

- Incentivizes development of programs that withstand public scrutiny and elimination of programs and courses that don't measure up
- Provides for comparability assessment
- Big downside, though
 - Sacrifices faculty engagement and buy-in,
 - Imagines a level of quality assessment that does not yet exist, and
 - presumes one-size-fits-all

Quality Assurance and Accountability Regarding On-line Learning

Student Completion

- A major concern with on-line learning
 - Perception: Students Who Complete Do Just Fine, But Too Many Don't Complete
 - Evidence from University of Central Florida:
 - Blended are more likely to complete
 - Fully On-line are less likely to complete
 - The dilemma – We don't really know
 - But we think we do;
 - So we develop policy on our "hunches"

Quality Assurance and Accountability Regarding On-line Learning

1. Data analytics for accountability -- collect data for reporting, comparing, and rewarding desired performance. **Directive**
 - Incentivizes improvement in course and program completion
 - Requires resources
2. Data analytics for improvement -- collect data to better serve students (the predictive analytics movement) **Supportive**
 - Incentivizes improvement in course and program completion
 - Engages faculty
 - Initially quite resource intensive
 - Data are hard for many to swallow

Focus of Policy – Supporting Innovation Through On-line Learning

Good Policy Enhances Innovation

So How Do We Do That?

Supporting Innovation Through On-line Learning--

1. The **Directive** Approach

- Examples: Incentive Funding, Regulatory direction, Required actions
- Incentivizes desired practices
- Sacrifices innovation at the local level in favor of innovation at the policy-making level

2. The **Supportive** Approach

- Incentives: Outcomes based funding, achievement awards/rewards
- Incentivizes desired outcomes and rewards entrepreneurship and innovation
- But, not as fun for policy-makers -- sacrifices direct engagement in promoting "best practices"

Ensuring Institutional Vitality through On-line Learning

BE STUDENT CENTERED

**...while incorporating the strengths
of your institutions**

Ensuring Institutional Vitality through On-line Learning

1. Institution by Institution -- *Benign*

- The Market Model: Incentivizes entrepreneurship and innovation within all faculty and allows the most active and effective to thrive.
 - Also allows for more nimble system over time
 - Protects viability of all institutions, as use of technology mediated instruction becomes more ubiquitous
- But if so good in principle, why hasn't it generated more innovation?
 - Florida has pockets of excellence in on-line education
 - And better than most in the aggregate
 - But many still not fully engaged

Ensuring Institutional Vitality through On-line Learning

2. Institutional Collaboration – *Between Supportive and Directive*

- Incentivizes institutions to work together to garner support; thus achieving financial economies through reduced upstarts and quicker economies of scale
- Jeopardizes vitality of institutions that aren't invited into or chose not to join collaborative efforts
- Makes abandoning low performing efforts more difficult, because of joint ownership
- Also, it's hard work in a community where collaboration is an unnatural act

Ensuring Institutional Vitality through On-line Learning

3. Lead Institution -- *Directive*

- Rewards *mission differentiation*
- Assures leadership on the agenda
- Allows focusing of resources
- Sacrifices the ability of all institutions to thrive in the emerging future of higher education

Ensuring Institutional Vitality through On-line Learning

4. New Online Institution -- *Directive*

- Can create of a well-branded, clearly mission directed institution to deliver the service.
- Prevents existing institutions, with established gravitas, to move into or expand in this arena
 - Important given the ubiquitous nature of on-line in higher education today – could leave many behind
- Ignores the reality of blended learning, which appears to be the most cost-effective if focused on student completion
- Provides no incentive for faculty within the traditional settings to innovate with the use of technology

Policy Matters

- Be Intentional
 - Never lose sight of your original goals
 - Use finance policy to drive desired outcomes
(don't be benign)
 - Do not ignore issues around quality & accountability
 - Intentionally promote innovation
 - Do not undercut vitality of your existing infrastructure
 - ***The how, however, is up to you***