

MINUTES - DRAFT
STATE UNIVERSITY SYSTEM OF FLORIDA
BOARD OF GOVERNORS
TASK FORCE FOR STRATEGIC PLANNING FOR ONLINE EDUCATION
AFFORDABILITY WORKGROUP
MEETING VIA CONFERENCE CALL
February 13, 2015

1. Call to Order

Chair Pam Northrup convened the meeting at 3:34p.m. on February 13, 2015, with the following members present: President Judy Genshaft and President Judy Bense. A quorum was established. Other attendees were Kim Wilmath, Cindy Deluca., and Jose Coll from USF.

2. Opening Statement

Chair Northrup went over the three questions President Hitt, Chair of the Task Force for Strategic Planning, tasked the workgroup with. The three questions are: (1) outline of primary issues, (2) initial list of goals, outcomes, and strategies for the state, and (3) further areas of investigation. Chair Northrup also reviewed some initial issues from her notes that the workgroup was asked to discuss (1) cost vs. price of online learning, (2) shared programs, and (3) fee structure for fully online students.

3. Discussion

Chair Northrup asked committee to work on identifying the issues at this meeting. Chair Northrup identified 2 studies that the workgroup should be aware of that address the distance learning fee. One was the Complete Florida Program Study as well as OPPAGA's review of Distance Learning and Technology Fees, which is not released yet. She also noted that the Cost Study for the Complete Florida Initiative looked at a subset of online learning, those students taking fully online programs and not engaging in activities on campus. So, caution that information provided is not fully transferable to all online students, particularly those students who supplement the face-to-face experiences with online courses.

Chair Northrup explained that findings from the Complete Florida Cost Student suggested that the fee is needed because when you add a service to an existing structure, it costs more to provide. This is due to adding staff and technology to provide this service.

Cindy Deluca expressed the need to differentiate between student fees and distance learning fees. Such as FIU allows students to designate themselves online only and waives their student fees as they will not be using any university services.

Chair Northrup mentioned that most universities charge students all fees. She also describes how UCF expanded distance learning many years ago (even as a supplemental to conventional courses) to improve access since they were reaching capacity for on campus

classes. She also went on to say how reducing or eliminating fees do not make a significant difference in the cost of attendance and will cause fiscal issues with the university that depends on those fees. She says we need to look for alternative ways to reduce cost. A possible solution, Chair Northrup mentioned, is for several universities to share costs and expenses with the delivery of distance education. This is a program being used in Georgia where institutions can participate in and share revenue from providing these services to all students in the state. They are able to collapse their fees, use prior learning assessment, and use open educational textbooks. This helps reduce duplication and competition among the universities in that state and significantly reduce the cost of these programs for the student.

President Bense explained that it might be a good idea to study models in other states, as well as, compare and produce a bunch of pilots based on those. This could be expensive and an alternative to that can be to find one good model and adjust to Florida's unique circumstances.

Chair Northrup notes that the legislative staff is very interested in keeping education costs low. However, she also noted that Florida ranks very well in affordability compared to all other states. Based on the study by the Complete Florida Program, 37 states assess a distance learning fee. She also mentioned another way to help with costs is to develop more competency based programs.

President Bense agrees that collaboration between universities and using competency based education could help reduce costs of providing an online education. However, we must work to inform the decision makers that even though there are no brick and mortar buildings, that online education is expensive to provide.

Cindy Deluca also explains that the online proctoring service is a significant expense as well as the technology to deliver the service and other expenses such as making them ADA compliant. The distance learning fee allows us to do this and is a cost saving in the long run due to not having to charge students directly for these services.

Chair Northrup suggests that moving to e-textbooks is also a way to help lower costs but explained professors decide what textbook is best for their class. Also, an issue in moving to eTextbooks, are the campus-based bookstore contracts. Of course, bookstores are trying to reduce costs to students through a variety of strategies across institutions.

Jose Coll wants to explore how students that are residing far away from the university are charged fees rather than those who are supplementing their education with online courses or are nearby campus and utilizing on-campus services.

Chair Northrup says we need to look at all of the fees and see what pertains to only fully online students.

Jose Coll wants to make sure there is not a way for all students to opt-out of fees and limit it to a subset of students taking only online courses.

Cindy Deluca explained that these discussions should differentiate between graduate and undergraduate programs as they are very different cost structures.

Chair Northrup believes we should focus on undergraduate students. All committee members concur.

Cindy Deluca wants to look at best practices across the state as well as other states. Kim Wilmath volunteers to put together a survey of these practices. President Genshaft concurs and asks her, Cindy Deluca, and Jose Coll to conduct the study. Committee wants to look at survey and discuss what the good practices are and compare it to the OPPAGA report.

Pam Northrup believes we are still in gathering phase and wants to focus on that prior to looking at solutions.

4. Concluding Remarks and Adjournment

Chair Northrup, with no further business to discuss, indicated that the next meeting will be sometime in March before the Board of Governors Meeting. Chair Northrup will have her staff setup the meeting. The meeting was adjourned at 4:19 p.m.

Dr. Pam Northrup, Chair

Andrew Romer