

Task Force on  
Technology-Based Learning and Academic Programs

January 11, 2007

This Task Force originates through the Office of the Provost at West Virginia University at the urging of the Implementation Team for the WVU 2010 Plan.

Rationale:

Nationwide, the number of students participating in online education courses and enrolled in distance-learning programs is increasing rapidly. *Making the Grade: Online Education in the United States, 2006*, a report by the Sloan Consortium, finds that the number of students taking online classes increased from 2.3 million to 3.2 million between Fall 2004 and Fall 2005. The number of new students, 850,000, is more than double the number added during any previous year. While many traditional undergraduates enroll in online courses, the percentage of nontraditional students taking classes online is higher than the percentage of traditional students.

Interest in and the use of technology-based learning has also been growing throughout WVU. Online learning may meet the needs of nontraditional students in West Virginia more effectively than traditional programs: online programs can provide educational access to rural students unable to attend face-to-face courses; online courses can provide continuing education and certifications for full-time employees; and online learning can use flexible scheduling to permit nontraditional students with familial obligations to participate fully. The development of online educational courses and programs at WVU, however, has been decentralized and carried out in discrete pockets of activity. There may be a need for more planning centrally within WVU.

Charge Statement:

This Task Force is charged with making recommendations for the further development of technology-based learning and academic programs. The task force should:

- understand the competitive context for technology-based learning and academic programs;
- inventory current courses and programs along with the characteristics of their participants;
- analyze institutional resources required to support technology-based learning; and
- recommend best practices to increase the availability and effectiveness of online offerings.

The following three topics provide specific prompts for the task force.

Topic 1: Technology-Based Education

- Understand the range of technology-based learning, including online, blended or hybrid, and web facilitated classes. How should technology-based programs be oriented towards different populations?

- Consider the role of technology in enhancing face-to-face environments. How should hybrid and web-facilitated learning environments be supported?
- Recommend methods to ensure that technology-based learning maintains the standards of learning and engagement expected in face-to-face courses.

### Topic 2: Implementation

- Gather and compare information to assess use of technology-based learning by nontraditional and traditional students.
- Analyze state and regional needs, potential audiences, and priority programs.
- Develop an assessment system to determine the ability of conventional programs to support additional online offerings effectively.
- Recommend priority audiences for technology-based learning (undergraduate or graduate students, lifelong learners or full-time students, local or dispersed populations).

### Topic 3: Processes, Functions, and Needs

- Inventory current resources including personnel, facilities, technology, and equipment available to develop and to offer technology-based courses.
- Analyze the processes, functions, and needs for the success of technology-based learning over the next five to ten years.
- Identify the resources required to help faculty and staff develop online courses and maintain courses over time.

The task force should seek input as necessary from individuals in the Office of Extended Learning, the Office of Information Technology, and the Information Security Program.

The task force should report action recommendations to Provost Gerald Lang by mid-May, 2007.

### Task Force Members:

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