



University of Connecticut
Office of the Provost

Peter J. Nicholls
*Provost and Executive Vice President
for Academic Affairs*

December 11, 2008

Dear FIRST NAME OF DEAN:

As the premier public institution of higher education in the state, it is incumbent upon the University of Connecticut to provide vision and leadership in all areas of teaching and learning, including the burgeoning field of distance learning. Thus, I am establishing a task force, chaired by Dr. Douglas Cooper of the School of Engineering and Desmond McCaffrey of the Institute for Teaching and Learning, that will research and report on the status, methods, and potential of online education as it relates to the recently approved academic plan.

Background

The Sloan Consortium 2008 Babson Survey entitled, "Staying the Course: Online Education in the United States," reports that:

- Online enrollment is growing ten times faster than that of overall higher education;
- 84% of those taking online classes are undergraduates.

The survey indicates that provosts from public research universities responded as follows:

- 60% felt online education was critical to the long-term strategy of their institution;
- 80% felt there was increased competition for online students among institutions;
- 75% felt online education expanded the geographic reach of their institution.

Duties

The task force is to analyze and report on the promise of online education with particular attention given to developing and documenting a roadmap forward for the University of Connecticut. In light of the current financial realities, the task force should carefully consider cost containment and revenue generation as critical factors in all of its conclusions and recommendations. Results of task force deliberations should include, but are not limited to:

Assessment:

- A review of the methods and practices of peer institutions in online education
- An inventory of support staff, faculty/unit activities and current online offerings here at UConn
- A measure of UConn's administrative, faculty and student interest in expanding our online offerings
- Input from academic unit administrators on their willingness/ability to offer faculty incentives

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- The technology infrastructure at UConn relative to that required for scale-up and implementation
- The financial and reputational opportunities and risks for UConn of an online education initiative.

Outcomes:

- Incentive options for faculty to encourage participation in developing and teaching online courses
- Expectations and qualifications of faculty who seek to develop an online course
- Intellectual property policies that maximize financial benefit to all parties
- A summary of views on the role of formal instructional design in online course development
- Needs and methods for new course approval and year-over-year evaluation of course quality
- Suggestions on prioritizing focus areas with greatest potential for return
- Recommendations for an organizing structure to facilitate and coordinate online course activities.

Please send the name of your School/College's representative to Connie.Boyd@uconn.edu by January 7, 2009. I would like the Task Force to start work at the beginning of the spring semester and report to me by April 15, 2009.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Peter Nicholls". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Peter J. Nicholls
Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs

Cc: Veronica Makowsky, Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education
and Regional Campus Administration