

DRAFT (JWW 3/24/09)
UNC Faculty Assembly Resolution 2009-2
Relating to Guidelines for Academic Planning

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5 WHEREAS, the UNC Faculty Assembly has over the past year commented upon the development of a new University
6 System Policy on Academic Planning and related regulations; and
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8 WHEREAS, the UNC Faculty Assembly applauds the careful effort to map clear understandings about program
9 development and review, particularly in a time of significant economic constraints; and
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11 WHEREAS, the UNC Faculty Assembly also applauds General Administration's efforts to assist campuses in complying
12 with relevant accreditation requirements; and
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14 WHEREAS, the UNC Faculty Assembly seeks to work effectively with campus colleagues, General Administration and the
15 Board of Governors on these matters; and
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17 WHEREAS, UNC Faculty Assembly delegates have reviewed recent proposals for administrative guidelines related to
18 academic planning and wish to offer comments and recommendations;
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20 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED
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- 22 1. The UNC Faculty Assembly takes particular note of "Guidelines for Alternative, Online, or Distance Education
23 Delivery of Approved Degree Programs" (version of March 3, 2009, as presented at the March 2009 UNC Board
24 of Governors meeting), and applauds the objectives of assuring quality programming and avoiding unnecessary
25 duplication of effort.
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- 27 2. The UNC Faculty Assembly believes, however, that certain aspects of these Guidelines raise questions that should
28 be addressed and urges the Guidelines to be modified as follows.
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- 30 a. *Definition of "Distance Education"*: The definition used encompasses several distinct areas of activity,
31 including "off-campus instruction for credit (whether face-to-face, electronically mediated, or a
32 combination of methodologies), whether a single course, a certificate program, or a degree program."
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- 34 i. This definition places in one framework programs offered physically off-site and those offered
35 using information technology in part or in total. The Assembly recommends the separate
36 sections of the Guidelines be developed to address these distinct types of activities. It appears
37 (from part E of these Guidelines) that SACS continues to regulate site-based/classroom group
38 instruction and "distance learning/technology-based instruction" under distinct rubrics and it
39 would be much less confusing to those working under these Guidelines to do the same.
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- 41 ii. The first half of the Guidelines relate to academic program development and specifically states
42 that only certain certificate programs are covered by its terms. In view of the broad definition of
43 "distance education" used, it appears that certificate programs would be subject to the terms of
44 the "distance education" portion of the guidelines. Why is that?
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- 46 b. *"Degree-related distance education activities."* This reference, in B.1. is unclear, in that it references "degree-
47 related" "activities." What is intended to be covered here? Would, for example, an executive masters
48 program offered with intensive weekend sessions off site and on-line instruction during the week now be
49 something that must be authorized, coordinated and monitored by General Administration?
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- 51 c. *Coverage of Degree-Related Distance Education Courses" and Focus of "Distance Education" Efforts.* The following
52 statement appears under Part D ("degree-related distance education courses"):
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1 The focus of UNC distance education efforts should be primarily at the upper division and graduate
2 levels, and where feasible in collaboration with community colleges. Therefore, except under
3 recognized circumstances (e.g., Independent Studies correspondence courses, iSchool courses for
4 high school, students [sic] courses developed primarily for on-campus students), UNC institutions'
5 distance education offerings should not duplicate lower-division (freshman or sophomore) courses
6 that are offered by a community college. In the case of site-based courses, the proposing institution
7 should give the local community college (if located in the city of the proposed site) the opportunity
8 to offer the courses before proceeding to offer the course itself. In the event of electronically-
9 mediated courses, institutions should avoid developing lower-division courses that have already
10 been developed for statewide distribution by a community college except as approved above.
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12 At its January 2009 meeting, the UNC Faculty Assembly considered a resolution that called for a clearer
13 mission statement to be developed with regard to on-line education: "*The UNC Faculty Assembly requests*
14 *that UNC System General Administration develop a clearer statement of the mission and objectives of expanded on-line*
15 *educational initiatives, and share that statement with the Faculty Assembly and faculty at the respective institutions for*
16 *review, comment, and endorsement.*" Recent correspondence from General Administration indicates the view
17 that it would be difficult to develop such a mission statement at the system level, yet the Assembly
18 believes that the language from Part D appears to attempt just such a mission definition. It may be that
19 the language from Part D is intended to address off-site face-to-face programming, rather than primarily
20 on-line programming, but if so, it provides another example about why separately addressing off-site face-
21 to-face programming from on-line educational programming would be best.
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- 23 d. *Program Requirements.* Part G addresses program requirements and covers a variety of important topics.
24 Although it is broadly framed, many of the topics addressed seem especially pertinent for on-line
25 offerings. Once again, the Faculty Assembly believes that a separate set of Guidelines addressing on-line
26 education explicitly would be much more helpful and useful to the campuses and faculty members being
27 regulated by the guidelines provided. There are some points of ambiguity that should also be noted:
- 28 i. *Policies regarding ownership of materials, faculty compensation, etc. (3.e).* It would be very useful for
29 General Administration to gather "best practices" models on these issues for reference by those
30 working on these matters on the campuses.
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 - 32 ii. *Faculty: Who?* Section 4.a. says that "Faculty members assigned to teach degree-related distance
33 education courses or programs must be *members or the regular staff* of the institution offering the
34 courses or programs or part-time faculty identified specifically to assist in distance education.
35 What is intended by the term staff? Are graduate students allowed to function as instructors?
36 SPA staff? EPA non-faculty?
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 - 38 iii. *Faculty Overloads, Involvement, Support and Training:* It is good that the Guidelines (4.c, .d, .e, and .f)
39 address these issues. Some of the ambiguity here may be inevitable, but it is likely that questions
40 regarding "appropriate faculty support services" and "appropriate training for faculty" will arise.
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 - 42 iv. *Scope of Coverage.* These requirements are included in Part G, which does not refer to its scope. G
43 follows section F, however, which relates to initiation of "Degree-Related Distance Education"
44 and addresses both "programs" and "courses." Is the intent of the document to impose the listed
45 program requirements on both degree "programs" and individual courses?
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- 48 e. *Review Criteria.* Part H.6 states that requests for authorization to initiate degree-related distance education
49 programs will be reviewed in part to determine "the absence of duplication of the proposed program with
50 other fact [sic]-to-face or distance education programs." It is likely to be difficult to determine what
51 programs "duplicate" each other, when on-line offerings are not physically bounded. How would this
52 process work?
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