

Adopted: May 29 2012

**ACADEMIC SENATE  
of  
CALIFORNIA POLYTECHNIC STATE UNIVERSITY  
San Luis Obispo, CA**

**AS-750-12**

**RESOLUTION ON eLEARNING POLICY**

- 1 WHEREAS, The Academic Senate's Resolution on Distance Education Policy (AS-581-02/CC)  
2 is ten years old; and  
3  
4 WHEREAS, Some courses and programs at Cal Poly now employ a broader range of  
5 educational technologies described in industry and by specialists in the role of  
6 technology in higher education as *eLearning*; and  
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8 WHEREAS, Cal Poly Continuing Education has recently encouraged faculty to develop online  
9 courses or convert existing courses for online delivery; and  
10  
11 WHEREAS, The Academic Senate Task Force on Online Education and the Academic Senate  
12 Curriculum Committee have endorsed the attached policy entitled "*eLearning*  
13 *Policy at Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo*;" therefore, be it  
14  
15 RESOLVED: That the Academic Senate adopt the following *eLearning Policy at Cal Poly, San*  
16 *Luis Obispo* document.

Proposed by: Academic Senate Task Force on Online  
Education

Date: May 3 2012

# eLearning Policy at Cal Poly San Luis Obispo, CA

30 Apr 2012

## 1. Preamble

This policy is an update of the former “Policy on Distance Education at Cal Poly” (AS-581-02/CC) and is designed to be a guide for faculty who plan to use technology to enhance student learning, improve student success, or deliver course content. The terms “Distance Education” and “Technology Mediated Instruction” in Academic Senate resolution AS-2321-96 and the Chancellor’s Office Academic Planning Database, which are also used in the Academic Senate’s Resolution on Distance Education (AS-581-02/CC), are inadequate to describe innovative technologies and practices now being used to enhance and transform teaching and learning. Thus, this policy uses the more general term “eLearning” (defined below), which is gaining currency both in industry and in discussions of technology in higher education among specialists at venues such as EDUCAUSE.<sup>1</sup>

Cal Poly will continue to encourage responsible innovation in teaching, embracing experimentation whose goal is both to improve the quality of education and to promote student success. While Cal Poly should remain receptive to innovative forms of using technology for these purposes, the University must also ensure that there is proper faculty review and oversight to uphold existing quality standards.

The basic principle underlying this policy is that best practices in teaching and learning will drive the use of technology in the curriculum. Thus, we should continually discuss the following questions about the technologies we use for teaching and learning:

- How do these technologies contribute to Cal Poly’s mission and identity as a comprehensive polytechnic university founded upon a “learn by doing” philosophy?
- How do these technologies help Cal Poly adapt to broader national and international changes in higher education?
- How do these technologies contribute to achieving Cal Poly's key strategic imperatives,<sup>2</sup> which include:
  - Developing and inspiring whole-system thinkers

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<sup>1</sup> See, for example, the list of eLearning resources at <http://www.educause.edu/Resources/Browse/ELearning/17176>

<sup>2</sup> These strategic imperatives appear on President Armstrong’s “Key Principles” document, which he revealed during Fall Conference 2011 (<http://www.president.calpoly.edu/fallconference/>).

- Embracing the teacher-scholar model while remaining committed to undergraduate education in a residential campus setting
- Fostering diversity and cultural competence in a global context
- Achieving sustainable growth and supporting world-class facilities and equipment

## 2. Definitions

Currently, the definition of the term “eLearning” is rather fluid and depends largely on whether the focus is on learning that occurs in the workplace or in higher education. Consequently, we adopt the following definition:

**Definition:** “*eLearning* comprises all forms of electronically supported learning and teaching.”<sup>3</sup> It is the use of a computer-enabled environment in which students acquire skills and knowledge employing any form of electronic media content delivered on any type of platform.

Courses developed using eLearning technologies may be delivered using a wide range and combination of methods including:

- Synchronous Instruction: “Instructional activities where both instructor and students are engaging in activities at the same time”<sup>4</sup>
- Asynchronous Instruction: “Instructional activities where the instructor and/or some or all students engage in activities that are not necessarily occurring simultaneously”<sup>5</sup>

Although the variety of course structure possibilities precludes a strict definition of course types, the primary factors that determine the teaching and learning experience are:

- **The degree of computer-mediated faculty/student interaction**  
Faculty and students can interact face-to-face or in a computer-based virtual space in a scheduled or unscheduled manner. Computer mediated interaction could be mixed (e.g., “hybrid” courses with some traditional classroom lectures supplemented by video conferencing) or it could be complete (e.g., a course in which all faculty/student interaction occurs using a web-based video conference tool).
- **The degree of technology replacement of faculty/student interaction**  
Technology can have a relatively limited role in course support (e.g., a course

<sup>3</sup> <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/E-learning> accessed 29 Feb 2012, 4:30 pm

<sup>4</sup> “Online Education White Paper,” January 2012, p. 22

<sup>5</sup> “Online Education White Paper,” January 2012, p. 22

uses a small number of pre-recorded video lectures that are posted online) or technology could be used to completely replace faculty/student interaction (e.g., a web-based, self-paced instructorless course).

In light of the range of degree of computer mediation and use of technology to replace faculty/student interaction, no set of standardized course descriptors can be created.

However, given the ubiquity of the terms “online course,” “online program,” “online degree” and related terms, and given the current interest to develop such courses, programs, and degrees both here at Cal Poly and more broadly in the CSU, it is useful to have definitions of both traditional and online instruction. We shall adopt the following:

**Definition:** *Traditional instruction* courses are “offered in the traditional mode with an instructor holding class sessions where students are expected to be physically present. Traditional instruction is also synchronous, with both instructor and students engaging in activities simultaneously.”<sup>6</sup>

**Definition:** *Online instruction* is “instruction delivered via an electronic network such as the Internet.”<sup>7</sup>

### 3. Applicability of this Policy

This policy shall apply to all new and existing credit-bearing courses and programs using eLearning technologies including online courses and programs offered by Cal Poly.

### 4. Faculty Responsibility for Curricular and Quality Control

Cal Poly faculty have the collective and exclusive responsibility for determining the pedagogies, instructional methods, and best practices most appropriate for the instructional modules, courses, and academic programs.

Whenever a department or faculty group proposes to initiate a degree program in which more than 50% of content is offered online or off-campus, approval in advance from the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) is required under the latter’s Substantive Change Policy.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> “Online Education White Paper,” January 2012, p. 22

<sup>7</sup> “Online Education Whitepaper,” January 2012, p. 22

<sup>8</sup> Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC), Substantive Change Manual : A Guide to Substantive Change Policies and Procedures (2012) available at <http://www.wascsenior.org/>

An eLearning Addendum to either the New Course Proposal or Course Modification form must be submitted for curricular review for any new or existing courses in which a total of more than 50% of traditional face-to-face instruction time is being replaced with eLearning technologies. Additionally, in these cases, either the New Course Proposal or Course Modification form must include the following two statements:

- A statement of the *degree (in percentage terms) of computer-mediated faculty/student interaction contained in the course* (e.g., “30% to 50% of faculty/student interaction for this course is via an interactive web-based video connection”).
- A statement of the *degree (in percentage terms) of technology replacement of faculty/student interaction* (e.g., “25% of this course is comprised of instructorless self-paced learning modules consisting of web-based video lectures, demonstrations, and automatically-graded quizzes”).

Approval of eLearning courses, sections, and programs shall be held to the same standards as traditional classroom instruction when reviewed by the department, college, and Academic Senate.

Faculty preparing an eLearning Addendum and faculty reviewing such addenda are encouraged to ask the following questions to determine the suitability of eLearning-based courses:

1. Is the proposed use of eLearning technologies consistent with the University’s mission and identity?
2. Is the proposed use of eLearning technologies likely to enhance student learning and improve student success?
3. Is the proposed use of eLearning technologies appropriate to achieving the desired learning outcomes for the course or program?
4. Is the proposed use of eLearning technologies likely to increase student access to education?
5. If the course being proposed or modified uses a significant amount of eLearning technologies, e.g., because it is being converted to an online course, is the course of equivalent quality and rigor to a course taught using traditional instruction?
6. Are the necessary instructional and student support resources available to facilitate the use of the proposed eLearning technologies, e.g., online access to advising and information sources, information technology infrastructure, etc.?
7. Does the course syllabus adhere to the same standards as traditional courses and include information related to specific eLearning issues?

8. Are safeguards in place that follow the WCET best practice guidelines<sup>9</sup> to insure high standards of academic integrity and to prevent cheating?
9. Is faculty availability and student contact time including virtual and physical office hours consistent with established standards and collective bargaining agreements and how will such information be clearly communicated to students?
10. Is the faculty/student ratio reasonable and consistent with both established curricular standards and collective bargaining agreements?

Additionally, faculty developing courses that use significant amounts of eLearning technology and faculty participating in curricular review are encouraged to consult the CSU Online Education Whitepaper<sup>10</sup> for a list of assumptions and best-practices relevant to the successful development, evaluation, and deployment of online course offerings.

Criteria for assessing the quality and efficacy of eLearning-based courses shall be developed by the academic units from which the instruction originates.

## 5. University Resource Responsibilities

Information Technology Services (ITS), the Robert E. Kennedy Library, the Cal Poly Academic Technology unit, Cal Poly Continuing Education, the Center for Teaching and Learning, and other university agencies may be called upon to provide necessary resources and services for the successful implementation of eLearning courses and programs. These resources and services include:

1. **Student Training.** Where applicable, the University will provide training in eLearning technology and use to students, perhaps through automated means (e.g., web video).
2. **Faculty Training.** Where applicable, the University will provide training in the use of eLearning technologies and instructional design to faculty.
3. **Technical Support.** Where applicable, the University will provide help desk services, account maintenance, software and hardware assistance, etc., as needed to support eLearning-based courses.
4. **Information and Facility Services.** The University will provide adequate access to library resources, laboratories, facilities, and equipment appropriate to eLearning courses and programs.
5. **Student Services.** The University will provide adequate access to the range of student services appropriate to support eLearning courses and programs, including admissions, financial aid, academic advising, and placement and counseling.

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<sup>9</sup> *Best Practice Strategies to Promote Academic Integrity in Online Education*  
Version 2.0, June 2009, WICHE Cooperative for Educational Technologies (WCET)

<sup>10</sup> "Online Education Whitepaper," January 2012, p. 28

6. **Student Evaluations.** The University should collaborate with faculty to develop and deploy student evaluation tools for eLearning-based courses, especially for courses in which no face-to-face meetings take place. Such tools should be consistent with the Unit 3 Collective Bargaining Agreement.

## **6. Assessment of eLearning Courses and Programs**

Criteria for assessing the quality and efficacy of eLearning-based instruction shall be developed by the academic units from which the instruction originates. eLearning courses, sections, and programs shall be held to the same standards as traditional classroom instruction when reviewed by department, college, and university program review committees.

Program Review committees shall evaluate the educational effectiveness of eLearning programs (including assessments of student-based learning outcomes, student retention, and student satisfaction), and when appropriate, determine comparability to campus-based programs. This process shall also be used to assure the conformity of eLearning courses and programs to prevailing eLearning quality standards. eLearning courses and programs shall be consistent with the educational missions and strategic plans of the Department, College, and University.

## **7. Contracting and the use of Outside Resources**

The University shall not agree in a contract with any private or public entity to deliver or receive eLearning courses or programs for academic credit without the prior approval of the relevant department and college. In addition, all such contracts must be in compliance with the relevant University policies and guidelines. The impetus for such a contract shall originate with the Cal Poly faculty, who would decide whether there is an instructional need and how best to fill it. As part of its review of eLearning-based courses within the scope of this policy document, the Academic Senate Curriculum Committee in conjunction with ITS shall determine the suitability of hosting course materials on non-university facilities.

## **8. Intellectual Property Rights**

Ownership of materials, faculty compensation, copyright issues, and the use of revenue derived from the creation and production of software, courseware, or other media products shall be agreed upon by the faculty and the University prior to the initial offering of an eLearning course or program, in accordance with established CSU and Cal Poly policies and the collective bargaining agreement.

## **9. Admissions**

Admissions criteria for eLearning-based courses shall be the same as for traditional face-to-face lecture courses. Agencies providing funding for eLearning courses or

programs shall not acquire any privileges regarding the admission standards, academic continuation standards, or degree requirements for students or faculty.

## **10. Course Descriptions and Advertising Guidelines**

Faculty and students have a right to know the methods of delivery and technological requirements of each course, program, and degree offered by the University. This information will be communicated to students in all relevant communications.

Publicized descriptions of eLearning courses, e.g., in PASS, shall always contain clear information regarding (a) the *degree (in percentage terms) of computer-mediated faculty/student interaction contained in the course* and (b) the *degree (in percentage terms) of technology replacement of faculty/student interaction* (see Section 4).

## **11. Impact on Faculty Personnel Decisions**

Faculty personnel decisions (hiring, retention, tenure, promotion, and post-tenure review) should value and reward course and curriculum development and professional development activities that result in improved instruction. However, no ranking of instructional methodologies or methods of delivery is to be used as a basis for personnel decisions. The role and value of eLearning should be made explicit in the personnel policies of departments and colleges.

## **12. eLearning Course and Program Funding**

Funding sources for the development of eLearning courses and programs shall be explicitly stated in all eLearning-based course and program proposals. Funding sources may include any combination of grants, self-support, private contributions, and state support. The originating department shall develop the funding source proposal through traditional means and shall make a recommendation to the Academic Senate as to the suitability and viability of the proposed funding source. If applicable, such proposals shall include funding for the services of an instructional designer.

## **13. Use of eLearning Technologies is Optional**

Nothing in this policy shall imply that eLearning is a preferred or required method of instruction. Implementation of this policy must comply with existing campus policies and collective bargaining agreements where applicable, e.g., workload and faculty rights. Furthermore, this policy is *only* applicable to new courses and course conversions with a substantial online component and is not meant to restrict or rigidly control the general use of eLearning technology in the classroom.



## 14. Resource Notes

The following are links to resources used in this document-

Online Education White Paper (January, 2012) produced by the Academic Affairs Committee of the CSU: <http://www.calstate.edu/>

WICHE Cooperative for Educational Technologies (WCET) – Cited by WASC  
<http://wcet.wiche.edu/>

Best Practice to Strategies to Promote Academic Integrity in Online Education (WCET)  
<http://wcet.wiche.edu/wcet/docs/cigs/studentauthentication/BestPractices.pdf>

The University of Hawaii's Distance Education Site  
[http://manoa.hawaii.edu/ovcaa/distance\\_ed/](http://manoa.hawaii.edu/ovcaa/distance_ed/)

State of California  
**Memorandum**

**CAL POLY**  
SAN LUIS OBISPO

**To:** Steven Rein  
Chair, Academic Senate

**Date:** June 18, 2012

**From:** Jeffrey D. Armstrong  
President



**Copies:** K. Enz Finken  
E. Smith  
A. Liddicoat

**Subject:** Response to Academic Senate Resolution AS-750-12  
Resolution on eLearning Policy

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This memo acknowledges receipt of the above-entitled Academic Senate resolution.

State of California  
**M e m o r a n d u m**

**CAL POLY**  
SAN LUIS OBISPO

**To:** Steven Rein  
Chair, Academic Senate

**Date:** September 20, 2012

**From:** Elizabeth Kinsley  
Chief of Staff

*Elizabeth Kinsley*

**Copies:**

**Subject:** Academic Senate Resolution AS-750-12

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It has come to my attention that President Armstrong's June 18, 2012, response to the above-entitled Academic Senate Resolution was incorrectly addressed to you as chair of the Academic Senate, which was before your term began.

Please consider this memo as acknowledgment that President Armstrong's response should have been addressed to 2011-2012 Academic Senate Chair Rachel Fernflores.

Thank you.