

Goal Six**Focus on optimizing technology to meet the educational and administrative needs of SWOSU.**

SWOSU Strategic Goal 6 Task Force has identified six measures of successful achievement of Goal Six. By 2014, SWOSU will:

1. Upgrade 100% of all identified computers on campus on a four year cycle.
2. Realize a consistent 90% satisfaction rate among administrators and staff for data mining ease from current databases.
3. Realize a 90% student satisfaction rate for online student services.
4. Realize a 90% faculty satisfaction rate for addressing their learning technology and distance technology training needs.
5. Have developed and begun implementation of a plan for all employees teaching online or in a distance modality to be “certified” to teach in these modalities.
6. Have reduced software licensing costs for the university without sacrificing operability or functionality.

The Strategic Goal Six Task Force has selected the following as priority measures of achievement.

1. Upgrade 100% of all identified computers on campus on a four year cycle.

SWOSU made a commitment to technology excellence by establishing a policy to upgrade or replace computers used by faculty and staff every four years. This has fallen in the last few years as budget constraints have prevented these upgrades. While the cost savings in the short run have assisted SWOSU in meeting its other commitments, this decision has begun to degrade the ability of SWOSU to meet its commitment to being a premier higher education institution. Students are arriving with far more technology than we have present on campus and demanding that the university and its employees are at least as well equipped as the students. SWOSU has not met this student demand in the classroom or among the faculty and staff.

References and Links:

- None

2. Realize a consistent 90% satisfaction rate among administrators and staff for data mining ease from current databases.

As the economic situation in Oklahoma has placed greater strains upon the SWOSU’s budget, legislators in Oklahoma City are demanding greater accountability of the taxpayer dollars allocated to higher education. In line with this accountability is a greater understanding and more in-depth numbers driven decision-making by the administrators and staff of SWOSU in not only the development and continuation of academic programs, but also in student support, retention and success. To arrive at these numbers and these decision points, data analytics has become a watch term in higher education. Monitoring of key performance indicators and the mining of decision-making data is no longer the purview of businesses alone, but now includes higher education. As a result, SWOSU must commit itself to arriving at this data and at data mining in general more easily and more readily with greater efficiency and easier access.

References and Links:

- Baepler, P. & Murdoch, C.J. (July 2010). Academic analytics and data mining in higher education. *International Journal for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning*, 4(2). Retrieved from http://academics.georgiasouthern.edu/ijstl/v4n2/essays_about_sotl/PDFs/BaeplerMurdoch.pdf

3. Realize a 90% student satisfaction rate for online student services.

In their “Guidelines for the Evaluation of Distance Education (On-line Learning)”, SWOSU’s accreditation body, The Higher Learning Commission (HLC), requires:

7. The institution provides effective student and academic services to support students enrolled in on-line learning offerings.

And the HLC requires under this general heading that,

Students in on-line learning programs have adequate access to student services, including financial aid, course registration, and career and placement counseling.

Students using on-line learning have adequate access to learning resources, including library, information resources, laboratories, and equipment and tracking services.

In order to meet these requirements, SWOSU not only needs to put the services into place for online students, but also needs to provide the services in a way that satisfies the needs and demands of the student body. Because the demand for these services to be delivered to the students is mandated upon the university, the university’s recourses are to ignore the requirement and face possible loss of accreditation or establish the services so they are usable and address the needs of the students. The taskforce recognizes that two costs are associated with this initiative measure. First, the financial costs associated with this measure may be substantial, depending upon the feedback that is received from students and the delta between the existing services and those requested by students. And second, the cost of the cultural shift in work flow processes and business flow processes associated with this measure will require training and familiarization of new processes throughout all university departments that services students and support the academic departments.

References and Links:

- HLC Guidelines for the Evaluation of Distance Education (On-line Learning) - <https://content.springcm.com/content/DownloadDocuments.ashx?Selection=Document,c00c3f32-56e5-e011-adf4-0025b3af184e;&accountId=5968>

4. Realize a 90% faculty satisfaction rate for addressing their learning technology and distance technology training needs.

Faculty development is a process and not a series of events. Too often when distance education departments deal with faculty development, they approach the situation through a series of events that is separate from the reality of where faculty members are in their professional development

when the training begins. Similarly and just as often faculty development is approached without a clear evaluation of where faculty members are in their development. As a result of this oversight, faculty development events are planned that have poor to no turnout.

Faculty development should be structured as a four tiered, abilities-focused process with each faculty member being leveled at her/his position among the tier categories. This tier structure assumes the development and acceptance of a college wide standard for quality online and blended course delivery and structure, whether this is the acceptance of a national standard such as Quality Matters or a locally developed and adopted method. Whatever standard the Distance and eLearning Faculty Council adopts as a rubric for rating the quality of a course, it should inform the development of individual sessions within a whole program.

References and Links:

- HLC Guidelines for the Evaluation of Distance Education (On-line Learning) - <https://content.springcm.com/content/DownloadDocuments.ashx?Selection=Document,c00c3f32-56e5-e011-adf4-0025b3af184e;&accountId=5968>

5. Have developed and begun implementation of a plan for all employees teaching online or in a distance modality to be “certified” to teach in these modalities.

Teaching in an online or distance modality is not the same as teaching in a traditional, lecture based, face-to-face classroom. The skill sets to teach effectively online or in a distance modality are not generally taught to up-and-coming graduate students in today’s academy. Rather, most faculty arrive with, and retain through their careers, the lecture based delivery model they were acclimatized to as students. This requires a concerted, focused effort to prepare faculty members for the wired classroom on the part of faculty developers. Faculty, old, tenured, non-tenured and young alike, must be trained in the newer learning technologies and techniques and then implement them if the university is to remain viable and relevant in higher education today. In its “HLC Guidelines for the Evaluation of Distance Education (On-Line Learning), the Higher Learning Commission requires the following evidence as part of the requirement to assure “the integrity of [the university’s] on-line learning offerings”:

6. Faculty responsible for delivering the on-line learning curricula and evaluating the students’ success in achieving the on-line learning goals are appropriately qualified and effectively supported.

The HLC requirement goes further in demanding the following examples of evidence:

On-line Learning faculties are carefully selected, appropriately trained, frequently evaluated, and are marked by an acceptable level of turnover.

The institution’s training program for on-line learning faculty is periodic, incorporates tested good practices in on-line

References and Links:

- HLC Guidelines for the Evaluation of Distance Education (On-line Learning) - <https://content.springcm.com/content/DownloadDocuments.ashx?Selection=Document,c00c3f32-56e5-e011-adf4-0025b3af184e;&accountId=5968>

6. Have reduced software licensing costs for the university without sacrificing operability or functionality

As operating costs of higher education continue their upward spiral, and as state legislators place universities under greater fiscal responsibility and fiscal scrutiny, the ability to remain competitive, provide similar or greater services to students, faculty and staff, and conserve precious fiscal allocations is burdening universities and colleges. One area where fiscal savings can be more readily attained is in the spiraling costs of technology. Open source software is providing a viable alternative to Off-the-shelf solutions for a myriad of technology software problems. Because of this, SWOSU will look to open source solutions when selecting software, and when appropriate, side with the selection of open source software in order to lower its technology costs.

References and Links:

- Abel, R J. (2006). *Best Practices in Open Source in Higher Education Study The State of Open Source Software*. March, 2006. Lake Mary, FL, The Alliance for Higher Education Competitiveness, Inc. Retrieved from: http://www.a-hec.org/open_source_state.html