The William States Lee College of Engineering Policy:

Evaluation of Online and Distance Education Courses and Programs

Guiding Principles

1. Curricular development and effective instructional engagement are the responsibilities of the faculty and their departments.
2. Courses with online instruction components including synchronous, asynchronous, hybrid, and blended courses differ in layout and methodology; the expectation is that instruction will be equivalent to that from traditional formats in terms of instructional engagement and teaching effectiveness.
3. Online courses require development prior to being offered. Faculty efforts towards the initial and ongoing development of online courses need to be recognized and supported.
4. Online instruction should engage students in positive learning and include opportunities for student-instructor and student-student interactions similar to traditional formats.
5. Online courses should evaluate student performance in multiple and varied ways similar to traditional courses, with timely feedback and remediation offered by the instructor throughout the course. All assessments of student learning should be designed to achieve the highest level of academic integrity.
6. Faculty performance in online courses should be regularly evaluated at the department level through peer review consistent with the unit's Peer-Review Policy as well as student feedback using criteria commensurate with that used in traditional courses. Instructors are expected to use best practices specific to face-to-face and/or online course delivery.

Standards and Processes

1) **To ensure instructional and learning efficacy and compliance with accreditation standards, t**he William States Lee College of Engineering uses the following minimum criteria for online course design and instruction:
   a) Faculty instructional engagement and student learning should be equivalent to that of face-to-face formats.
   b) Course design should reflect the pedagogical characteristics for distance learning with course material, assignments, and learning assessments designed for the online delivery environment.
   c) Instructors should facilitate engaged learning with student-teacher interaction and peer-to-peer discussion and/or exchange. Assignments should be structured to ensure timely instructor feedback and student improvement throughout the course.
   d) Student learning assessments should be unique to each course and should be designed to achieve the highest level of academic integrity feasible.

2) The College of Engineering uses the following process to ensure that course proposals adhere to the minimum online instructional standards prior to implementation and that current online courses are regularly reviewed and brought into compliance if necessary:
   a) New online courses are proposed and evaluated through the existing faculty governance processes. The review of current online courses is evaluated at the department level.
   b) The College of Engineering will create a set of recommendations and guidelines to evaluate online course design and will publish a set of best practices currently used locally or nationwide.
   c) The departments will meet annually to share best practices in their disciplines and use this information to inform teaching practices with the goal of continuing enhancement of their courses.
   d) Faculty offering online instruction will participate in appropriate instructional training prior to engaging in online instruction (e.g., Quality Matters, etc.). Faculty teaching courses with online components and involving distance education will participate in at least one professional development activity each academic year that explores current methodologies and technologies used in distance education.

3) The College of Engineering requires online course instruction to be evaluated equitably with that of face-to-face course formats:
   a) Departments will implement procedures to ensure online instruction is regularly evaluated akin to peer classroom visitations in traditional delivery formats.
   b) Departmental evaluation standards should use the best practices as recommended by the Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL).
   c) The web-based student course evaluation system should contain assessment questions specific to the online learning environment.

4) In collaboration with other stakeholders (e.g., CTL, OneIT), the College of Engineering will develop strategies designed to deter student academic dishonesty in the online learning environment, including:
   a) Providing training for faculty to develop assignments and assessments that require original application of course content.
   b) Requiring the use of tools to verify the academic integrity of assignments, quizzes, and examinations.

5) In collaboration with CTL and other stakeholders, the College of Engineering will provide professional development opportunities to faculty for online course design and instruction:
   a) The minimum requirement for all faculty and teaching assistants in courses with online components and/or involving distance education is the completion of one professional development activity each academic year that explores current methodologies and technologies used in distance education.
   b) Specialized training and continuing education in online instruction and course design as well as exceptional accomplishments will be recognized in the Annual Review process.

Reporting and Oversight

The Departments will send a one-page written report detailing their online courses, proposed initiatives, and appropriate training of faculty and teaching assistants involved in online instruction to the Strategic Programs and Assessment Resource Team (SPART, aka Assessment and Accreditation Committee) for the calendar year by the end of the academic year.