A Vision for Statewide Undergraduate Teaching Programs
April 2010

<u>Vision</u>: Transform current programs to predominantly asynchronous, internet-based course delivery over three years.

The need for change:

- Statewide teaching programs were put into place originally as predominantly live delivery programs. Most programs were politically motivated and funded and little, if any marketing research was conducted to assess need for programs in various locations.
- Faculty attrition at RECs has created the need for greater course sharing and distance delivery, and this trend will likely continue. Faculty have either left voluntarily, left due to dissatisfaction, or have been denied tenure, which is thought to have been precipitated by the heavy teaching effort for few students.
- Gainesville-based students could benefit from courses delivered from RECs but different modes of delivery and scheduling (3 hr blocks at night vs 3 50-min periods per week) have created problems in this regard.
- Unit leaders have argued that the programs do not make "economic sense" (i.e., SCH per FTE), and this has been accentuated by budget cuts in recent years.
- Center Directors are constrained to hiring new faculty with similar teaching expertise when a statewide faculty member leaves the program. This may not be in the best interest of the research and extension mission of the centers.
- The need to travel to centers weekly to receive courses (i.e., live instruction and polycom) places a burden on working people who may live up to 30 miles from the center. This also limits recruitment to areas within reasonable driving distance to the center.
- Statewide courses that have switched delivery mode to predominantly internet-based have yielded promising results (higher enrollment, greater satisfaction). Examples include Nematology (Giblin-Davis), Organic and Biochemistry (Moore), Introductory Soil Science (Daroub), Introductory Entomology (Baldwin).
- Interactive videoconferencing (Polycom) has been problematic as the sole delivery platform for statewide courses. Instructor evaluations from remote sites are generally lower, significant portions of courses are lost, and administrative time requirements are reported to be twice as high as online courses.

Approach:

- Change content delivery in statewide programs to predominantly asynchronous, internet-based platforms. This solves the issue of scheduling meeting times among locations with different audiences. Students increasingly enroll in DE courses on college campuses for flexibility, and learning outcomes have been documented to be equal to (or better than) face-to-face instruction. The amount of travel to centers for students would be reduced, and faculty would not necessarily have to work late into the evening.
- A major goal is to increase the efficiency of use of teaching resources in Statewide programs. Redundancy of course offerings should be minimized. Gainesville resident students should take courses originating from centers; policies that require them to take live courses when an internet-based course is available should be abandoned.
- Utilize centers for "critical live" components of programs, i.e., those elements of instruction that cannot be delivered effectively via the internet. This may involve entire courses (e.g., field-based labs), or portions of courses (e.g., plant identification, surveying exercises). Critical live components can be packaged to reduce the frequency of travel (e.g., one Saturday per month, one week during the summer).

- Assuming a ratio of 75% DE: 25% live yields about 15 credits of course work in the major delivered live. This would be approximately 5 courses. If the major is designed to be completed in 2-3 years, then personnel at centers would be teaching 1 course live each fall and spring semester, on average. This allows continuous contact with the faculty member who is the "face" of the program at the center, and limits teaching load to the equivalent of ~2 courses/year. Note that this load is easily handled by a non-tenure track position such as a Lecturer, or a faculty member with <50% teaching FTE.
- To be successful, the Dean's office should provide resources for faculty to convert their courses to online formats. A stimulus-funded position has been allocated for this purpose. This doubles the staff in IFAS Communication Services to help faculty with technological and pedagogical issues. Software and hardware are being purchased currently for placement at centers and departments.
- Programs need to prioritize courses for conversion; in most cases this is the department. This meshes with the ongoing curriculum enhancement process. Courses needed for completion of a major should be placed in three categories (there may be exceptions):
  - Introductory courses, those that are prerequisites for others, core courses. ***Convert in 2010-11.***
  - Core courses and others that constitute the bulk of the major. ***Convert in 2011-12.***
  - Remaining required courses, electives. ***Convert in 2012-13.***
    - First, the faculty in programs, who own the curriculum, must finalize the curriculum enhancement process and (re)define the major. This should be done prior to the 12 May Statewide programs meeting in Gainesville. This should include a preliminary plan for which components of the major can be delivered DE, and which are critical live.
    - Second, a series of retreats or meetings during summer 2010 is needed to align priorities among programs and centers since all majors are dependent on courses offered by other units, and faculty at centers must answer to two administrators.
    - Third, course conversion will begin on or before 1 July 2010 according to the plan developed.

The outcome of the 12 May Statewide meeting and meetings immediately thereafter is to produce a plan that sorts the curriculum into DE and critical live components and prioritizes courses and modules for DE conversion.

Issues:

- Faculty may not buy-in to DE course conversion or delivery of their assigned course(s). Courses may have to be reassigned to willing faculty or other personnel.
- The DE literature and previous experience suggest that faculty will need release time to develop DE content, even with resources provided by the Dean's office. Unit leaders will have to work together to develop faculty work plans and if needed, adjust teaching loads.
- The role of faculty at centers will change from teaching their previously assigned courses to handling the critical live components, perhaps in addition to DE courses they deliver.
- Enrollment at RECs may not increase, which may create a sense of "a lot of work for nothing". However, if the digital media is crafted correctly, it will be useful for on campus instruction and extension activities regardless of enrollment at RECs.
- Students enrolled at RECs fit the demographic of a self-funded student. It may be possible to create self-funded sections of courses and enroll students outside of Gainesville in these sections, thereby generating cash flow to centers and faculty outside of normal budget allocations, incentivizing participation. However, teaching in self-funded programs is considered overload, and centers may lose teaching FTE through self-funded conversion. Programs may not reduce their on-book SCH generation when creating self-funded sections of courses, so SCH generation for Gainesville-based students would have to increase proportionately.