

COMMITTEE ON ACADEMIC POLICY  
Minutes of Meeting of March 3, 2017

Present: M. Humi (Chair); J. Beck; S. Boecker; J. Doyle; M. Elmes; J. Hanlan; A. Heinricher; D. Olinger

Guest: Rachel LeBlanc

Rachel LeBlanc, from CPE, joined us to discuss the details of the agreement with Southern New Hampshire University (SNHU) regarding the delivery of distance learning in cooperation with WPI. WPI has partnered with SNHU to deliver graduate concentration courses in Engineering Management for students enrolled in SNHU's MBA program. WPI develops and delivers the curriculum for 4 courses in SNHU's MBA program (this constitutes about 1/3 of their MBA program). No WPI credit attaches to any of these courses which are not designed to be at a level of what WPI would offer to its own MBA students. The courses are fully online and are delivered via the Blackboard learning management system.

The courses involved are:

EMA 600, Introduction to Engineering for Engineering Managers [developed by Professor John Sullivan (ME)];

EMA 610, Systems Thinking for Engineering Managers [developed by Barclay Brown (NTT, Systems Engineering)];

EMA 620, Systems Engineering and Business Practices {developed by Bob Swarz (NTT, Systems Engineering)};

EMA 630, Project Management for Engineering Managers [developed by Mark Flanders].

WPI, through this arrangement, has been able to learn how SNHU delivers online courses at the scale at which they operate (for about 75,000 students). In addition to the WPI faculty who develop the courses, the courses involve the services of instructional designers as well as an outcomes assessment staff. The courses are taught by staff recruited throughout the country and involve discussion board activity and email communication. Each section enrolls approximately 25 students. There are no lectures, but there are structured assignments focusing on a fixed set of materials. There is little variation structurally from section to section. Each section is subject to program monitoring and evaluation, feedback to the instructors, and required improvements where appropriate. Deans are assigned to monitor each program. Instructors are paid approximately \$2,500 per course.

What WPI gains from this initial cooperative arrangement is an "under the hood" look at how distance learning is managed from beginning to end. WPI observes how SNHU uses master course design and learning outcomes as well as knowledge of what SNHU does to market the courses and program. For our 4 courses, WPI receives all of the revenues (approximately \$1,881 per student per course).

In response to a question of whether these courses would be accepted for transfer at WPI, since they are designed by WPI faculty, Ms. LeBlanc indicated that they would not be accepted for transfer credit to WPI since they are not at a level that would meet the requirements of our

Systems Engineering program. In response to a query about whether this was intended to be a “one off” experiment or the start of an ongoing partnership, Ms. LeBlanc indicated that it was still too early to say. It does seem, however, that there are not that many areas of synergy between SNHU and WPI to support an expanded ongoing cooperative program.

It was noted that CPE has a vetting process for the review of the qualifications and background of the adjunct instructors hired to teach the sections. It was also noted that WPI now has an instructional designer in ATC, but that more instructional design experts would be needed should this program be expanded or utilized as a model for WPI distance learning in the future.

Respectfully submitted,

James Hanlan. Secretary