DL Classroom Task Force Report
and Recommendations
July 2018

History of the Task Force

The DL Task Force was formed as a result of item 27 in the executed memorandum of agreement between NYIT and the AAUP (2017-2022 NYIT-AAUP CBA). Item 27 reads:

> *27. Distance Learning*
> *The Provost and the AAUP Chapter Presidents will appoint a committee to review Distance Learning at NYIT, with the committee to make initial recommendations by January 2018, and final recommendations during the Spring 2018 term. The provisions of Article X. f (Distributed Learning Sections) will be modified in accordance with the committee's final recommendations. If the committee's recommendations are not adopted by the end of the Spring 2018 term, then Distance Learning courses will no longer be offered, except for online and blended courses.*

Due to logistical issues (the MOA was not signed until 10/23/17), the task force was not formed until February 2018. The timeline was therefore extended, with the committee making its recommendations at the end of the spring 2018 semester. The two AAUP chapter presidents agreed, in an email with the provost dated 1/21/18, that the task force should be responsible for setting its own agenda and timeline, so that issues could be resolved to best benefit student learning.

The task force was charged by the provost at its initial meeting of 2/14/18, to look at the student and faculty experience in the DL rooms as currently configured and recommend ways to improve the student experience so that it is comparable to that of a regular classroom.

The task force set as its ground rules the following:
- All issues will be identified and prioritized before we start identifying solutions.
- If six or more members of the task force are in agreement about an issue, we will consider that issue addressed, and move to the next item on the list.
- A survey will be conducted of students and faculty who have taken courses / taught in DL rooms within the past three years.

The task force was initially comprised of James Dunne, Kathy Gill, Fran Glazer (chair), Laurie Harvey, Sheri Kelleher, Robert Koenig, Sarah Meyland, Kate O'Hara, and Kristen Smith. In mid-March, Kate O'Hara resigned from the task force and was replaced by Raj Tibrewala.

Survey

The task force developed a short survey for faculty, and a companion survey for students, about their teaching and learning experiences in the DL rooms. (Survey questions can be found in Appendix A.) In February 2018, the survey was sent to all faculty who had taught, or all students who had taken a course, in a DL room in the past three years.

Response rates among the faculty were good: the survey was sent to 159 faculty members, 55 of whom started the survey, and 41 completed it, for a response rate of 35%. Response rates were lower among students: the survey was sent to 3632 students, 292 of whom started the survey, and 160 completed it, for a response rate of 4.4%. (Findings can be found in Appendix B, for faculty, and Appendix C, for students.)

Members of the task force had compiled an initial list of issues with the teaching and learning experience in the DL classrooms. Survey responses confirmed the items on the list were consistent with student and faculty responses and concerns (widely considered issues), and enabled us to add the following additional items to the list:
- A small-but-significant number of faculty and students reported not being aware that the course they were teaching / taking was in a DL room until the first day of class.
- A significant number of students reported feeling very disconnected when the faculty member teaches exclusively on the "other" campus.

It is also worth noting that the vast majority of respondents stated that they would not teach / take a course in a DL room if there were another viable option. While this report focuses on improving the current situation, we also strongly recommend that a group be convened to find a forward-looking solution that our students and faculty will embrace, rather than tolerate.

Issues

After identifying the issues, we grouped them into categories and prioritized them before identifying solutions. The total list, including those issues raised by survey participants, comprised 18 broad categories with anywhere from one to 20 items in each category. In this report, the DL Task Force presents recommendations for changes, followed by those issues already solved or with solutions underway.

Recommendations for 2018-19 Academic Year

DL rooms need more robust support

Academic Computing Services (ACS) was initially formed in 1994 to support the newly established (then-new) DL (Distance Learning) rooms. In the past 8 years, the number of traditional classrooms upgraded to smart classrooms has reached 85% of the total. The number of traditional classrooms upgraded to "smart classrooms" has reached 85%. The portfolio of ACS now includes all the smart classrooms and multiple conference rooms in addition to the DL rooms. However, ACS staff have not increased in number, even as their portfolio has increased dramatically.

1. We recommend hiring **DL Coordinators.**
   DL Coordinators on each NY campus will report to the associate director of academic computing and will be responsible for supporting faculty teaching in DL classrooms. To ensure that there is a dedicated DL coordinator on each campus whenever DL classes are in session, we recommend the creation of **four** such positions, two on each campus.
   - 2 DL Coordinator positions on each campus, 7:30am - 3:30pm and 3:30pm - 11:30pm Monday - Friday, to ensure proper support for all classes taught in DL rooms. (*N.B.:* Night classes end at 11:15pm. The DL Coordinator will need time after classes finish to collect, send, and receive documents for these classes.)

- Saturday DL classes will be supported by the Academic Computing Services full-time staff member on duty, since the total number of classrooms in use that day is much smaller than on weekdays and weekday evenings.

DL Coordinators are charged with liaising with faculty to ensure that appropriate technical and pedagogical (e.g., proctoring, document delivery) support is provided for faculty members teaching in DL rooms. The DL Coordinators will have the following job responsibilities:
- Ensuring the security and integrity of the exam process by liaising with faculty, hiring and training proctors, and ensuring that proctors are present for all exams.
- Scheduling proctors.
- Providing training, upon request, and technical support for faculty teaching in DL rooms.
- Hiring and training student workers to provide technical support.
- Review end of shift proctoring checklist with proctor before they leave.
- Improving training of student workers by creating a comprehensive training manual.
- Tracking exams and other documents that are sent between campuses.
- NYIT cell phone number and e-mail address is widely publicized so DL faculty can request support.

2. Additional Support Staff
   The task force recommends hiring more support staff, especially at the beginning of the semester and in the evening. Since Academic Computing relies heavily on student workers, it is recommended that they wear ID badges so that they are easily identified when entering a classroom.

3. Training of Support Staff
   The task force also recommends more comprehensive training of support staff, including how to come into a room professionally and identify themselves to the faculty member, typical faculty requests, and more complete training on the technology. Currently, technology troubles often need to be escalated because the responding staff cannot resolve them, causing further delays.

4. Best Practices Manual
   The task force recommends a Best Practices Training Manual be created for support staff, to include support for DL rooms and working with faculty and students. We anticipate that the DL Coordinators would be responsible for additional training and creation of the manual.

Other Issues That Require Attention

Clear communication to all stakeholders

It is essential that faculty members teaching in DL rooms know who the support staff are, what changes have been made to the technology in the rooms, and how to request help.

5. Concerning communications, we make the following recommendations:

   1. Create a web page for DL rooms that includes the following information / creation of a DL classrooms web interface maintain and updated by DL coordinator:
      - Contact information, hours, and photos of DL Coordinators at both campuses;
      - Roles and responsibilities of the DL Coordinators and student support staff;
      - Maps of the DL room layout on both campuses, with room capacities;

- Documentation and videos for using the technologies;
- Best practices, contributed by faculty, for teaching in DL rooms (short videos);
- How to request additional support from DL Coordinator, CTL staff, ACS staff, others;
- Where faculty members can request proctors;
    - Services that the proctors need to perform;
    - How exams are to be handled;
- Can report any DL technical issues;
- Can request training;
- Review DL how to videos;
- Review best practices for teaching in a DL format;
- Tracking location of their exams during the document delivery process; and
- Provides ongoing feedback opportunities for faculty using DL rooms.

2. Send automated emails prior to each semester to all faculty teaching in DL rooms. Emails should include offers of training upon request (the week before classes, during free hours, etc), reminders of who's who, information about requesting exam proctors, basic information on other policies and procedures, updates on any changes to the DL rooms, and links to make appointments for additional help.
3. Improve the user interface for the control panel and create a one-page "cheat sheet" with quick reminders of how the technology works, to be posted on web and as computer desktop image.
4. Room numbers should in all cases be DL-# (not currently the case in Manhattan and in Old Westbury for DL-5).

Faculty development

The task force had lengthy discussions on how pedagogy must be adapted to the DL environment to make the teaching and learning experience successful, including:
- Affect
- Dynamic presentations
- Different types of pedagogies
- Use of technologies
- Ways to discourage cheating
- Use of Bb in conjunction with DL rooms

6. Best Practices Collection
The task force recommends a collection of Best Pedagogical Practices be compiled and made available on the DL web pages, and that faculty teaching in DL be offered support for pedagogy as well as technology.

Teaching on both campuses

Students feel disengaged when the faculty member is on the "other" campus. When faculty members are able to teach on both campuses, the students are much more engaged in the course and student success increases accordingly.

7. Dual Campus Instruction
The task force recommends that faculty members be strongly encouraged to go to the alternate campus twice in the first month of the semester so they meet the students face-to-face, and to go a third time, mid-

semester. Travel expenses should be reimbursed by the dean. To make it possible for faculty to travel to the alternate campus, chairs should make every effort not to schedule faculty for DL classes immediately preceding or following single-campus classes. Finally, the task force recommends that the collection of Best Pedagogical Practices specifically include ideas as to how to connect with students on the distant campus.

Exam Proctoring

The task force started by gathering and reviewing policies and procedures already in place in the various schools and colleges. Some schools have created policies; other schools leave proctoring to each department.

8. Proctoring of Exams
After careful review, we recommend the following:
- Proctoring must be available upon request for any course taught in a DL room.
- Proctoring should be centralized so it is consistent and reliable.
- Proctors will by hired and scheduled by the DL Coordinator.
- Students should not proctor exams.
- The DL Coordinator should explore the possibility of paying existing staff members an hourly rate for proctoring exams outside of their normal working hours.

Handling of exams

Individual faculty members handle exams differently depending on the discipline, so it's not possible to recommend a single solution.

9. Exam Handling Protocols
We recommend that the institution support four options:
1. Secure Document Delivery (see discussion below)
2. Secure scanning to email, performed by proctor at end of exam. (A standard procedure needs to be created.)
3. Support for faculty who want to move their exams to Bb
4. Support to work with faculty to design alternatives to exams

Document delivery to the "other" campus

Although NYIT does have a van that delivers items from one NY campus to the other twice weekly, it has not proven a reliable method for timely return of exams and other class materials.

10. Handling of Other Course Materials
We make the following recommendations:
1. For 2018-19, add additional stops to existing daily courier service so that there is an additional pickup at Academic Computing on the sending campus, and an additional drop-off at Academic Computing on the receiving campus.
2. Implement a live tracking system for documents going between ACS offices. Tracking should be visible to the faculty.
3. If the van still does not prove reliable, retain a professional next-day delivery service to transport documents between the two DL rooms (recommendations available if needed).

Items Already Resolved or Being Resolved

1. DL designation for courses

We learned through the survey that a significant number of students, and even some faculty, did not realize they were in a distance learning course until they got to the room on the first day of classes, even though students and faculty could search the class schedule for DL sections. In response to the survey, the Registrar's office has created a DL designation for courses taught in DL rooms to minimize this from happening in the future.

2. Create a Single Course and Grade Roster

In response to feedback from the committee, the Registrar is currently working with IT to create a single roster and Bb shell for DL courses.

3. Technology set-up should be identical in each room

For consistency and ease of use, technology should be identical across all rooms, including the relative position of displays, the types of connectors that are available, etc. This issue has been corrected. The only exception is that DL-2 is able to accommodate Zoom, and other pairs of rooms are not. As DL rooms are upgraded to incorporate Zoom connectivity, this feature will also become consistent.

4. DL room technology and environment should be improved

The task force identified 15 items - either technology or environmental issues - in the DL rooms that were recommended for improvement. In May 2018, the task force surveyed faculty who have taught in the DL rooms in the last 3 years (the same pool as were surveyed previously), and asked them to rank the items in priority order. (Survey and results shared in Appendix B.)

IT-Client Services has submitted a capital request to upgrade one pair of DL rooms in the coming fiscal year (FY19). If the capital request is approved, IT-Client Services will work closely with faculty to identify the specific improvements to be implemented.

The DL Task Force will continue its work in the Fall 2018 Semester to assure that work on improving the teaching and learning experience continues to be improved.

Respectfully submitted,
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