

Task Force on Online Learning (TFOL) Report

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Preamble:

The Task Force on Online Learning (TFOL) was presented with four charges each of which is listed below in **BOLD**. Within each charge the committee addressed areas that are considered nationally as essential elements needed for successful online learning. Research shows that the online environment is different from traditional teaching and learning and requires a reframing of how educators and institutions view course design and delivery. This environment is so different that the taskforce suggests a new model of implementation and evaluation.

The committee has tried to put forth standards for each of these elements and operationalize them for the NEIU community. Each standard will be discussed within the four charges given to the Task Force.

The elements are:

- Course Design
- Course Content
- Faculty Preparation/Readiness
- Course Facilitation and Delivery (faculty performance)
- Institutional Support
- Learning Management System Requirements
- Student Readiness/Engagement

It is necessary that the elements comprising success in an online learning environment be viewed comprehensively and not as separate units. To this end, the goals and action plans presented in this report are considered to be minimum suggested requirements. Each department, under the auspices of their college, should establish specific action plans within the suggested guidelines presented here that are appropriate to their discipline. These points are also mentioned in Goal: Develop a means of determining when a course is “approved” to be taught online.

The success of these recommendations is also contingent upon the formulation of an action plan to be approved by the Provost's Office.

Task Force Charge 1: Guidelines/best practices for developing/delivering high quality online courses

Goal: Provide training, software and workgroup support for faculty who wish to incorporate online features into their face-to-face courses.

- To encourage the use of online technology, opportunities should be made available to support faculty who wish to implement some aspects of online learning while still maintaining a traditional classroom experience.

Goal: Establish student support for online learning

- Make all buildings WIFI capable so students can access online courses while they are on campus
Differentiate online courses from regular courses in Banner and in the printed course schedule so they are easy to identify when students register.
- Enrollment Services should send an automatic email to all students enrolled in an online course that encourages them to take online course tutorials. These tutorials should be available on NEIUport as

well as through NEIU Blackboard.com. Faculty should also be able to put a tutorial link on their BB site.

Task Force Charge 2: Guidelines/best practices for how to prepare effective online teachers

Goal: Develop a means of determining when a course is “approved” to be taught online

- Each department should develop a strategic plan for online teaching
- Each department needs to establish a means by which courses are evaluated prior to being taught online for the first time. Considerations should include faculty preparedness and course design
- A campus-wide protocol needs to be considered with departments having specific criteria included in their own evaluations of course readiness.

Task Force Charge 3: Guidelines/best practices for evaluating online instruction

Goal: Establish a campus-wide definition of what constitutes a hybrid and online course to be customized by department as needed.

- Online: Fully online with no face-to-face meetings.
- Hybrid: A combination of online and face-to-face meetings. The *hybrid* designation is defined by individual departments. Specific meeting times must be listed in department notes for the benefit of the students.

Task Force Charge 4: Establish an ongoing advisory committee for online instruction

Goal: Define and develop infrastructure support for NEIU

Adequate level of support staff will be needed (committees, etc. don't have much authority) to provide assistance for online courses. Each college may need its own support staff for the online courses.

- The Faculty Council on Technology should be designated as the official committee to take leadership in responding to learning management systems, accessibility issues, and requests for campus-wide hardware and software.
- The Center for Teaching and Learning should be designated as the official group to test, select and drive the adoption and use of new software. To this end, CTL needs to be provided with a consistent budget and adequate staff.
- Establish an advisory committee to address the ongoing needs and development of online learning throughout the University. The membership of this committee would include representatives from each college, CTL and FCT. Ultimately the goal is to establish a faculty council for online and instructional technology development within 2 years.