Background

The Higher Education Opportunity Act (HEOA) of 2008 connected compliance with federal regulations on distance learning, one of several provisions of the Act, to institutional eligibility for federal financial aid for their students. Institutions' compliance with (HEOA) is one facet of accreditation. The College already has in place Administrative Procedure 4105 Distance Learning, which describes how compliance with federal and state regulations is met. In Fall 2012, the Distance Learning Committee (DLC) sponsored a faculty survey to gauge our college's level of compliance with federal regulations pertaining to distance learning courses. Specifically, the survey's purposes are to (1) increase awareness of DL regulations, and (2) to obtain baseline data for improvement. DLC plans to use the results to inform faculty development activities and to support our college's preparation for the accreditation self-study in 2016.

Methodology

The Distance Learning Committee developed the questions, and the ten-question survey was deployed for two weeks in Fall 2012 through Banner Survey tool. Faculty who received the survey were Skills and Pedagogy for Online Teaching (SPOT) certified and who were assigned to teach distance learning (online and hybrid) courses. The group also included faculty who were not assigned to teach a DL course in Fall 2012. SPOT certified faculty are designated as a group in Banner information system. To encourage optimal participation in the survey, the Distance Learning Coordinator, Assistant Distance Learning Coordinator, and Dean of Library & Learning Resources attended department chair meetings with interested divisions especially ones that have greater offering of DL courses. Personalized email messages were also sent to specific chairs and divisions whose meeting schedules did not coincide with the timing of the survey. Out of 168 DL faculty, 58 faculty or 34.5% completed the survey.

Summary of Results

1. How faculty meet the requirements of regular and effective contact
    a. **Instructor-initiated discussion forums** related to course content
        i. 32.7% reported "once a week" (19/58)
        ii. 29% reported "more than once a week" (17/58)
        iii. 17% reported "not all all" (10/58)
        iv. 17% reported "less than once a week" (10/58)
    b. Form of **communication** to answer student questions (check all that apply)
        i. 65.5% (38) reported using discussion forums
        ii. 96.5% (56) reported using email
        iii. 43% (25) reported using phone
        iv. 5% (3) reported using social networking
    c. Opportunities for **students to interact** with each other (check all that apply)
        i. 46% (27) more than once a week
        ii. 34.4% (20) weekly
        iii. 15% (5) occasionally to not at all

2. Frequency of **posting new announcements** in Moodlerooms or Course Studio
    a. 46.5% reported "weekly" (27/58)
    b. 24% reported "more than once a week" (14/58)
    c. 22.4% reported "more than once a semester but less than weekly" (13/58)
    d. 6.8% (4/58) reported "once a semester"

3. If **email is used** with students (check all that apply)
    a. 65% (36) email tool within Moodlerooms course shell
    b. 91% (53) Mt. SAC email account
    c. 3% (2) private email account

4. **Drop policy in DL course**: **74%** (43/58) reported "**yes**;" **24%** (14/58) reported "**no**." Comments based on themes:
    a. It's the students' responsibility to drop classes.
    b. Attendance and submission of assignments guide whether to drop "inactive" students.
    c. Drop students who miss the equivalent of three weeks of a full semester.
    d. Send warning emails to students they may be dropped if they don't email back.
    e. Drop students as soon as they no longer participate in class.
    f. Drop students before first census date and right before last day to drop.

5. 56.8% (33) **use course statistics** (Moodlerooms Reports) to determine whether to drop a student; 43% (25) do not.

6. **Accessibility** of course content (left blank if not using a method listed in survey)
    a. Videos are captioned: 74% (20/27 respondents who used videos) compliant; 43% (25) not applicable
    b. Audio files have text transcripts: 72% (8/11 who used audio files) compliant; 68.9% (40) not applicable
    c. Images have alternative text/descriptions: 78% (29/37 who use images) compliant; 22% (13) not applicable
    d. Color is not used to convey meaning: 84% (32/38 who used color) compliant; 29% (17) not applicable
    e. Tables include row/column headers: 91% (31/34 who used tables) compliant; 32.7% (19) not applicable

7. Require students to submit **printed homework** assignments: 43% (25/58) "yes"; 55% (32/58) "no"

8. Hold a face-to-face "mandatory" meeting in the first week of classes: 63.7% (37/58) "yes"; 34% (20/58) "no"

9. Dropping students for "not attending" in the first week of classes at a higher rate than when "mandatory" meetings were held? 90% (10/11) "no"; 9% (1/11) "yes"

10. Support needed to improve compliance with DL regulations – themes captured in "Use of Results" below

<u>Potential Use of Results Based on Faculty Comments:</u>
1. Continue to conduct DL regulations compliance surveys – separate out hybrid from online classes; separate out currently assigned from unassigned to teach DL classes.
2. Offer workshops to faculty on:
    - DL regulations
    - Regular and effective contact (what is and isn't)
    - Adding media to their courses
    - Determining their courses' compliance level
3. Inform faculty on where faculty can find assistance with captioning
4. Create an exemplary DL course program (award)
5. Add sample courses (in training course shells) with best practices on DL regs
6. Add DL regulations to SPOT and info from SPOT to public webpage

<u>Appendix</u>
- Actual survey with the questions
- Administrative Procedure 4105 Distance Learning

<u>Questions/Comments:</u>
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