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Great Basin College
Faculty Senate
Academic Standards Committee

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Written Committee Report – 28 February 2014 [appended 17 March 2014]

Meeting convened at 10:00 am in Elko HTC 123; Pahrump PVC 120; Winnemucca GBC 109
Present: Scott A. Gavorsky (Chair); Jan King; Diane Wrightman; Mike Elbert (quorum)
Absent: Doug Hogan; Earl Owen; Scott Nielsen

The meeting was held to discuss a request by a student for non-traditional credit. The name of the student is not given in this public report per FERPA regulations.

The student requested that non-traditional credit be granted for two GBC classes (ECON 103 and STAT 152) for two related classes through Straighterline.com. Straighterline.com is a commercial company which lacks regional accreditation, although it is recognized by the American Council on Education.

The student provided GBC with documentation from Straighterline.com outlining the course syllabus and requirements. These documents were forwarded to the concerned departments (Business and Mathematics) for an initial decision on the credit. The two departments split; one was for granting the credit, the other against it for lack of sufficient information on Straighterline.com.

The Academic Standards Committee discussed the request in terms of two larger issues:

1. Under what basis can the committee assess the transferability of courses from Straighterline.com?

2. What means exist under current policies for the committee to assess future requests from similar companies? The committee concurs with the observation of Jan King that such requests are likely to become more common.

Given that the academic departments split on their opinions of the granting of credit, the committee continues to struggle with the question of how the Academic Standards Committee can fully assess the request from companies like Straighterline.com. While the material provided by the company appears solid, the lack of accreditation means little validation of the institution is available to the committee.

The committee consensus is that the issue of accepting credit for institutions such as Straighterline.com will need to be considered more completely in the near future, and to consult with other GBC stakeholders to do so.

In the matter of the original student request for the granting of non-traditional credit, the Academic Standards Committee voted 4-0 to request the Business and the Mathematics Department to offer the student the opportunity to take a Challenge Exam in the two classes for

the granting of credit. The Challenge Exams appeared the fairest way to assess the student's understanding of the material for the courses, and could potentially provide guidance for future episodes.

At this time, no action item is needed from the Faculty Senate.

The Committee also voted to hold a meeting in April to discuss further the question of dealing with future requests. The Committee would like to invite to this meeting personnel associated with the new grant positions dealing with non-traditional credit issues. This meeting will cover (but will not be limited to) the following issues:

1. What parameters are to be used in assessing the granting of non-traditional credit?

2. How are commercial institutions such as Straighterline.com to be assessed, and by whom?

3. Is the current GBC policy of requiring students to have at least 15 credit hours completed before non-traditional credit is considered viable in today's environment, and in what ways would removing the requirement create problems for the efficient processing of transfer credit?

Addendum 1: At a meeting on 7 March 2014 among the registrars/admissions officers of other NSHE community college institutions, Jan King discovered that sister institutions are not currently granting credit for Straighterline.com courses, even after one of them had been specifically approached by Straighterline.com to do so.

Addendum 2: The Business and Math departments agreed to offer the Challenge Exams, and the student was informed of this possibility via e-mail on 11 March 2014. As of 17 March 2014, no response to the request has been received.