

# Supporting Blended Learning at Simmons: An Action Plan

Fall 2007

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## ***I. Blended Course Working Group Charge & Progress***

The approach to blended course development at Simmons is three-pronged, involving the active and coordinated support of the Academic Technology Committee (ATC), Academic Technology (AT), and the Blended Course Working Group. The *Blended Course Working Group* was charged with developing this document, an action plan that:

- Defines what constitutes blended learning at Simmons, and how it is different from fully online
- Certifies the business case (where do the numbers work including real costs and real income, what is the market/demand, how do we reach the market)
- Benchmark exemplary programs at other institutions and establish criteria for excellence.
- Creates an inventory of resources already in place at Simmons to support blended courses
- Establishes guiding questions for programs and faculty considering blended
- Defines a policy framework for participation
  - o programmatic goals, faculty preparation
- Defines a policy framework for course development
  - o Accessibility, instructional and visual design, and intellectual Property
- Defines the support and services required for faculty and students and responsibilities for them
  - o Documentation, administrative/technical support, peer mentoring, staffing requirements
- Outlines a program for faculty/staff development
- Outlines a framework for ongoing assessment of courses and program evaluation
- Recommends a plan for showcasing and sharing success on an ongoing basis

The working group met face-to-face three times during spring 2007. Between meetings, members worked on assignments that included conversations with deans, environmental scans, and investigation of promising practices at other institutions. A considerable amount of the group's work took place online within Simmons Vista and in a wiki dedicated to the project, the place where members posted their assignment work prior to each face-to-face meeting. In this way, the group took a "blended" approach to its own committee process.

In addition to the accomplishments of the working group, *ATC* has taken responsibility for hosting a Blended Course Faculty Interest Group (FIG), which provides an opportunity for faculty and staff with expertise and interest in on-line teaching and learning to meet, discuss the issues, and provide mutual support. This group was launched in March 2007. *ATC* intends to sponsor FIG gatherings at least once a semester on an ongoing basis.

*AT* has taken responsibility for offering a range of opportunities for professional development, consultation, and financial support in the area of blended learning:

1. Regularly-offered institutes on blended learning (launched in June 2007);
2. Instructional design and instructional technology consultation;
3. Solicitation of outside funding through grant proposals to foundations (proposal submitted to the Sloan Foundation in July 2007); and
4. Internal funding through PTRC Grants.

## ***II. Blended Learning at Simmons***

Generally speaking, “blended learning” refers to courses in which some sessions take place face-to-face and others take place online. As opposed to increasing the sense of *distance*, well implemented blended courses will increase the sense of *presence* that Simmons has in the lives of our students. Students will perceive Simmons as a college that strives to meet them where they are, in the workplace, during field placements and semesters abroad, and at homes that may be distant from the campus.

The working group researched the literature on blended learning. Some maintain that any online learning component that results in reduced “face” time constitutes blended learning. Others, such as the Sloan Foundation, state that a program needs to achieve an average of 50% online coursework to be accepted as blended. At Simmons and at this juncture, the group recommends no minimum – that *any* course redesigned to move sessions online should be considered to be blended. However, this definition may need to be revisited as Simmons matures in its implementation of blended learning.

## ***III. School Plans***

The Working Group representatives consulted with their deans and polled faculty to articulate plans for blended course development/redesign in each school. What follows is a list of specific near-term plans for each school, as well as projections for the future. The working group recommends, as goals and projections for blended learning are finalized, to charge school curriculum committees with systematic review of courses and with developing a master plan for achieving their schools’ blended learning goals.

**College of Arts and Sciences (CAS):** Three CAS faculty members participated in the Summer 2007 Institute on Blended Learning. As a result of this experience, Madalaine Pugliese blended SPND 422 (Differentiated Instructional Strategies Using Technology Across the Curriculum), Bob Goldman is also blending two statistics courses DEDU 651/652 (Applied Statistical Analysis I and II), and Janie Ward will develop a new blended course on the topic of “race and class.”

*3-5 Year Plans:* Looking to the future, CAS is exploring the potential for blended learning in the Dix Express program and for independent learning, including capstone experiences like the internship and independent study.

CAS is also exploring and developing blended courses in a number of the graduate education programs, including courses at off-site locations. In addition, selected courses in other CAS graduate programs (e.g. Communications Management) may lend themselves to a blended approach. Such courses will be considered on a case-by-case basis. Finally, a number of doctoral education courses are already blended or fully online and more are anticipated.

**Graduate School of Library and Information Science (GSLIS):** Two GSLIS faculty members and one adjunct participated in the Summer 2007 Institute on Blended Learning. As a result of this experience, Candy Schwartz is blending LIS 419 (Subject Analysis), Jeannette Bastian will blend LIS 438 (Introduction to Archival Methods), and adjunct instructor Linnea Johnson will blend a new course entitled “Technology for Information Professionals.” In addition, two other courses are being transitioned into blended/online format: Linda Braun’s LIS 460 (Technology and the School Library Media Center) and Gerry Benoit’s LIS 486 (Systems Analysis).

*3-5 Year Plans:* Contingent upon receipt of Sloan funding, GSLIS West will also develop blended versions of their five core courses. These blended courses will be redesigned by Boston-based faculty for GSLIS West, with Boston faculty traveling to the West campus to conduct several face-to-face sessions for each course. Faculty will also be able to teach the same blended courses in Boston, with the added benefit of expanding blended learning on the main campus. Approximately 120 students enroll in GSLIS West courses each year.

**School of Health Studies (SHS):** Three SHS faculty members participated in the Summer 2007 Institute on Blended Learning. As a result of this experience, Lynn Foord-May is blending a new course entitled "Recognizing and Responding to Diversity Related Conflict," Karen Teeley will blend "Care at the End of Life," and Susan Neary will blend NUR 422 (Clinical Pharmacology in Primary Health Care Nursing).

Nursing is developing a blended doctoral program of Nursing Practice (seven courses total), scheduled to begin in Fall 2008. Sloan funding, if received, would be used to support the development of that program.

*3-5 Year Plans:* Other blended/online initiatives that are in the planning stages within HCA include a program for nurse administrators in leadership positions and a certificate program in diversity management that will be co-sponsored by one of HCA's professional organizations.

**School of Management (SOM):** Three SOM faculty members participated in the Summer 2007 Institute on Blended Learning. As a result of this experience, Sylvia Maxfield is blending two courses, "Corporate Social Responsibility" and "Managerial Economics" and Vipin Gupta is blending a course on strategy for Dix Scholars. Mindy Nitkin audited the Institute and therefore does not have a designated course to blend.

*3-5 Year Plans:* SOM anticipates that 25-30% of student learning will take place online through a combination of blended and online courses.

**School of Social Work (SSW):** Two SSW faculty members participated in the Summer 2007 Institute on Blended Learning. As a result of this experience, Abbie Frost and adjunct faculty member David Robinson will blend "Evaluation in Social Work Practice," a course that is required for all students in the program. With two sections scheduled to run in Fall 2007, anticipated total enrollment is 40 students.

In addition, SSW is working with Academic Technology to develop a blended mini-course entitled "So Your Organization Wants a Website: What You Need to Know about Website Planning and Design." Three of the five sessions associated with this course will take place online.

#### ***IV. Working Group Recommendations for Support of Blended Learning at Simmons***

The working group has divided its recommendations into three categories:

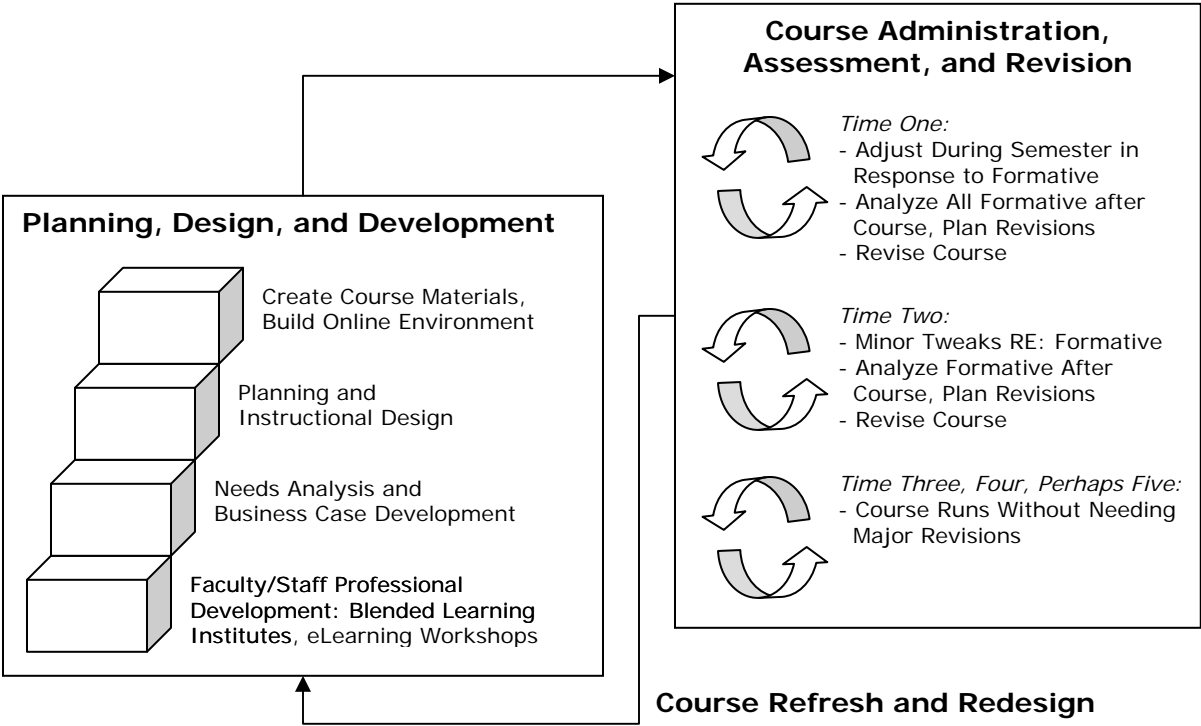
- Teaching, Learning, and Assessment
- Business Case
- Institutional Policies

### A. Teaching, Learning, and Assessment

1. The **model and processes** for creating and sustaining blended courses/programs at Simmons should represent best practices in scaleable support, instructional design, and instructional technology.

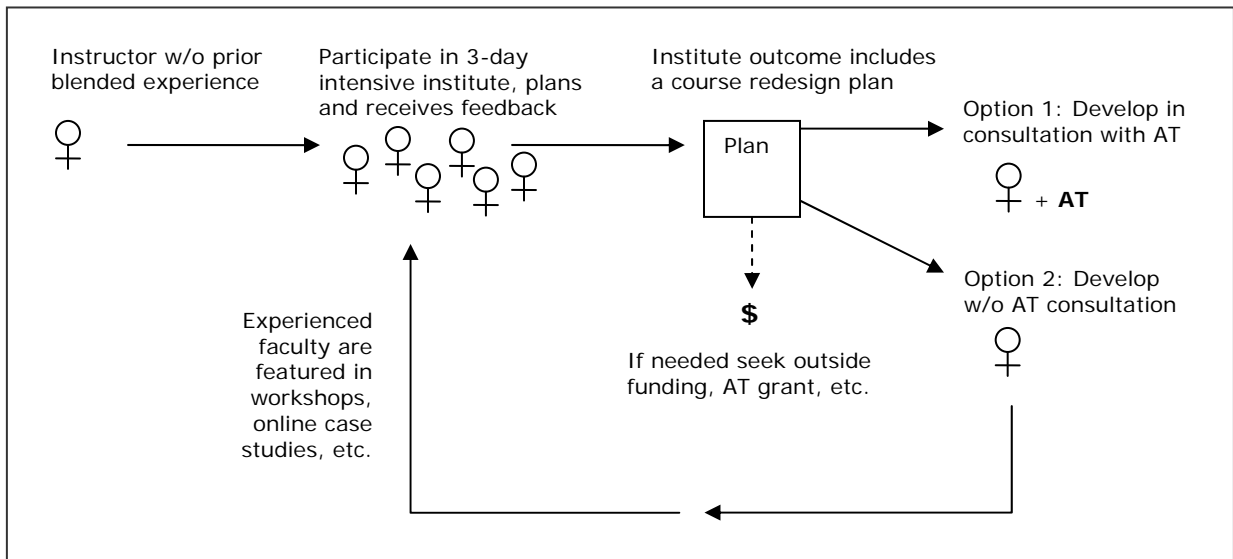
Blended coursework can present a steep learning curve for faculty, students, staff, and administrators who are new to the process. Phases of development include: professional development for faculty and staff, needs analysis and business case development for the course/program, planning and design, development, student recruitment, and an iterative cycle of course offerings and revisions in response to learning outcomes and formative feedback.

Because technology is in a constant state of change, and because it can take years to develop a deep understanding of blended learning instructional strategies, it is important to view this as an ongoing cycle. Courses will need to be revamped and redesigned every four to five years. Faculty and staff will need opportunities and time for professional development workshops, faculty lunches, and peer mentoring. Instructional designers will be needed to help with planning, assessment, analysis of formative assessment, and revisions. Instructional technologists will be needed to experiment with and evaluate new technologies, build prototypes, create "Quickstart" guides for common use scenarios, and to help ensure that the underlying course code meets current standards.



In this light, blended learning calls for the creating of a "community of practice" that involves both formal and informal avenues for professional development and support. First, we outline the recommended process for formal professional development in the area of blended learning. Subsequent recommendations in this section suggest strategies for informal and ongoing support.

The following diagram lays out a process by which first-time developers of blended learning courses can receive the professional development, consultation support, and resources that they need to succeed:



*Explanation of the diagram:* Simmons will offer three-day intensive professional development workshops for faculty who are taking on blended learning for the first time. These workshops will be modeled on the successful program developed at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. With the addition of two staff members, Academic Technology will offer the workshop two times per year, starting in spring 2008.

The workshops will be conducted in blended format so that participants can gain a student-eye perspective on the blended learning experience. Workshops involve considerable peer feedback, so faculty will also be learning from one another. In addition, successful workshop alumni will be included in these three day events, either by sharing their work in person or by being featured in online case studies. By the end of each workshop, participants will have developed a course redesign plan that includes a draft syllabus, assessment plan, and sample blended learning module. Workshop “graduates” will be ready to begin blended course development or redesign, with the provision of market-competitive compensation (see policy section for benchmarks and recommendations on course redesign compensation).

At this point, some faculty may feel comfortable moving forward with course development on their own. Others will want to work with school-based support structures, such as SHS’s Department of Online Teaching and Learning (DOTL), on the details of course development (see “Option 2” in the diagram).

However, we anticipate that a number of workshop graduates will opt to seek consultation with Academic Technology instructional designers and instructional technologists during the course development phase (see “Option 1” in the diagram). Consultation may include: help revising/testing activities, editorial feedback on written modules, help designing and setting up assessments, graphic design consultation, coaching on the use of Vista and other educational technologies, and assistance gathering research data. Whenever possible, this consultation will involve helping faculty learn how to create and revise their own courses, as opposed to

building courses for them.

Workshop graduates will receive up to 20 hours of AT consultation as they develop and implement their blended courses. Consultation may include everything from instructional design advice (e.g. feedback on draft lesson plans, help integrating the online and face-to-face aspects of the learning experience, advice on strategies for course assessment and revision), to instructional technology support (e.g. instruction on how to create a Voice Over PowerPoint, advice on technical implementation of the course within Simmons eLearning).

Some faculty may choose to make modest changes the first time they offer their blended course, and then increase the online portion of the course, the complexity of online assignments, or sophistication of technologies used in subsequent iterations. To meet this need for deep and ongoing support, previous graduates of the Blended Workshop will be eligible for funding, in-depth consultation, technical support, and school-sanctioned course release through the PTRC grants and fellowship program.

Technology Action Steps:

- Academic Technology (AT) develops materials, online and in print, that lay out a process for blended course development and support, including guidelines for developing a course redesign plan.
  - Academic Technology will offer three day intensive institute to prepare faculty for blended teaching. To accommodate the needs of both on campus and adjunct faculty, the institute will be offered in two formats: face-to-face and blended.
  - Contingent upon faculty completion of a three day blended course design workshop, Academic Technology instructional designers and instructional technologists are available for consultation with faculty on their courses. Academic Technology's approach will be, whenever possible, to advise and teach faculty how to do the technical implementation themselves. In this way, faculty will have the flexibility and capacity to change and update their own courses.
2. Ensure that both students and faculty have **adequate resources and sufficient fluency to succeed** in blended learning contexts.

Resources include adequate hardware, software, and Internet connectivity. Fluency includes both technical abilities and an understanding of what it takes to teach/learn well in a blended course.

Since a blended course replaces a portion of face-to-face classroom learning time with learning online, frequent and consistent online access is essential for both faculty and students, both on campus and at home.

Fluency is more difficult to define. For faculty, this means being comfortable experimenting with new pedagogies and new technologies, as well as being able to teach successfully in an online context. For students, fluency entails both technical proficiency and understanding how to meet the demands of online learning.

#### College-Wide Action Steps:

- Schools articulate and implement systems for assessing and achieving baseline student fluency.
- Deans develop strategies for ensuring technology access for faculty who are teaching blended courses, including laptop and broadband Internet access for those who are teaching from multiple locations.
- Deans require faculty attendance at workshops for each major upgrade to the learning management system (e.g. Simmons eLearning).
- Deans require all first time blended teachers to complete a three day intensive workshop prior to developing a blended course. Any exceptions to this requirement must be pre-approved by the faculty member's dean. The Blended Learning Institute will be offered by Academic Technology two times per year.
- Deans and Departmental Chairs encourage faculty to experience blended firsthand by doing meaningful work in blended format (e.g. taking a blended approach to committee work).

#### Technology Action Steps:

- TechGov investigates and recommends strategies for ensuring student access, including access for students who face the digital divide.
- Technology continues to refine and improve its system for gathering information about faculty and student technology access (hardware, software, and means of Internet access). A special effort will be made to poll those who are not active online. Survey results will be shared with all programs involved in blended course development.
- Academic Technology provides students and faculty with online resources such as: tutorials, exemplars, case studies, and pre-developed materials that faculty can use (or adapt for use) in their courses. This could include topic-specific micro-sites, such as those provided by UW-M, and a revamp of the Faculty and Student Resource Centers in Vista.

### 3. **Augment/improve the system of technical support** for faculty and students

Technical support is critical for the growth of blended courses. "Support" needs to be strengthened across several dimensions: expanded hours of service, decreased response time, and increased range of services. Both student and faculty have varying degrees of technical competency and need access to technical help both on campus and from their home computers. Contingent upon funding, Help desk hours should be expanded to 10-11 p.m. and longer weekend hours to accommodate the flexibility inherent in the blended model.

While workshops can accommodate the broader educational needs, technical support is usually time sensitive. On-line FAQs may alleviate and possibly eliminate some of the calls to the Help Desk, but as blended and fully online learning, grow so will the need for technical support.

#### Technology Action Steps:

- Technology analyzes data already gathered on student/faculty satisfaction with the current help desk model, considering options for improved support.
- Contingent upon funding, Technology expands help desk hours.

- After migration to Vista 4, Academic Technology develops an online student orientation that will be administered during the first two weeks of each semester and available as a self-paced module online.

#### 4. **Increase/improve access to instructional design** consultation for faculty

For the purposes of this document, instructional design includes both the original course development and systems in place for ongoing, continuous improvement.

The literature on blended teaching indicates that thoughtful instructional design is key to a successful blended teaching/learning experience. However, Simmons needs to put a system into place that will provide faculty with adequate instructional design support without over-taxing human resources and/or budgets. Assuming that Simmons offers a comprehensive set of online resources, eLearning software workshops, and a Blended Learning Institute on a regular basis, faculty who have taken advantage of these opportunities will be well positioned to get the most out of their consultations with an instructional designer. For this reason, we recommend that faculty who have completed *both* a Blended Learning Institute and an at least one eLearning workshop receive priority in allocation of instructional design support.

Because most faculty members have limited experience with developing blended courses and teaching in a blended format, assessment is central to the success of this initiative. By assessment we mean a systematic and thoughtful strategy that faculty use to gather information on how the course is going, analyze results, and make adjustments to address issues that arise. We recommend that assessment include:

- *Baseline assessment* prior to course launch. For example, faculty could compare their course plan and online materials with the [Quality Matters](#) rubric (designed for use in self- and peer-assessment) or the [Exemplary Course](#) rubric to identify gaps and areas in need of improvement.
- *Formative assessment* during the course. This will help faculty identify and address issues, helping ensure both the success of the course and achievement of student learning outcomes, and help inform future revisions of the course.
- *Summative assessment* (course evaluation) at the end of the course. All schools already have a process for course evaluations in place. However, these evaluations should be reviewed with blended learning in mind to ensure that the questions are relevant to that teaching context.

#### College-Wide Action Steps:

- Schools articulate and adopt a strategy for assessing the quality of their blended courses. For example, the “Quality Matters” process could be used for 360-degree assessment, goal setting, and course revision.

#### Technology Action Steps:

- Work is underway to increase instructional design and instructional technology staff, with two new positions that are in the process of being filled as of 11/20/07.
- Contingent upon funding, Academic Technology retains faculty as consultants and peer mentors, with compensation.

- Building on the successful professional development model created by faculty at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, Academic Technology sponsors three-day intensive workshops on blended course development, twice a year (anticipated offerings each January and June, starting in June 2008). With compensation, Simmons faculty who are proficient in blended learning participate as Blended Learning Institute and eLearning Workshop presenters.
5. Develop a **College-wide strategy for research and data-gathering** to demonstrate the outcomes and effectiveness of blended learning and to facilitate faculty publication in both their discipline and in the scholarship of teaching and learning.

Because the concept of blended learning is relatively new, it is important to gather data on the impact of this mode of learning. Analysis of this data will serve many purposes: encourage continuous improvement of blended courses at Simmons, facilitate faculty discipline-specific publication as well as publications on the scholarship of teaching and learning, and establish Simmons as a leader in these areas.

#### Technology Action Steps:

- Academic Technology, in conjunction with Blended Course Institute graduates, works with researchers at the University of Central Florida to adapt UCF's model for embedded research for implementation at Simmons.
- Faculty who develop blended courses agree to participate in (and/or allow) data-gathering and documentation of their courses. This information will first be used for the purposes of course improvement, but will be gathered in such a way that it will be useful in the development of case studies and, as appropriate, publications.

## B. Business Case

As the college looks to increase its offering of blended courses and programs, it is important to have a set of criteria that can be applied to development proposals that are put forward for consideration. Each school will have different priorities and rationales for blended course/program development, but the Blended Course Working Group recommends that a business case always be made to inform strategic decision-making regarding the investment of time and resources for blended course/program development. Analysis prior to committing to the development of an individual course would no doubt be less stringent than that for a program, but the working group believes that in all cases, course or program, this step should not be skipped.

The following recommendations are intended to ensure sound decision-making and fiscally-responsible development:

1. Conduct a **Needs Analysis** before committing to the development of new blended programs. Questions to address within the business case include:

- *Market:* How do we know if there is a market for the course/program that is being proposed? What is the market rate for comparable programs? Is this revenue stream sufficient to cover associated costs? What do competitors charge for similar programs? What strategies will we use to "get the word out" about the

course/program, and when do those strategies need to be put into action to ensure that courses achieve adequate enrollment?

- *Rationale:* What is the locus of interest for the program/course? To what extent will the program extend our visibility or reach within the region? How will this course/program increase new student recruitment and/or student retention? Is this course/program a competitive advantage or catch-up strategy? Is the blended format likely to meet the needs of these students and faculty, as well as result in the desired learning outcomes? Are there other reasons for converting to blended, such as efficiency of space use? How realistic are these assumptions, and how will we ensure that these benefits are realized?
- *Capacity:* Do we have sufficient faculty expertise, interest, and support to succeed in the venture? Have the faculty participated in a blended learning workshop? If not, how will we ensure that faculty members are prepared to transition to the blended format? Is an adequate system of support in place within the school? If not, what costs will be associated with putting this system in place, along with associated staff/faculty professional development?
- *Anticipated Course/Program Lifecycle:* It is likely that in the early stages of development the course/program will not “pay” for itself. How many years do we anticipate investing in the course/program before it begins to break even or make money? Looking to the future, do we anticipate that at some point the market will become saturated or even decline? If so, what is the anticipated term of profitability? What is the lifecycle for course refresh and redesign?

#### College-Wide Action Steps:

- Schools adopt the guiding questions outlined above as a framework for needs analysis.
- Schools decide who reviews needs analyses and makes decisions on proposed course/program development.

#### 2. Develop strategies for the **internal and external marketing** of blended courses/programs.

In order to make blended teaching and learning financially successful it is necessary but not sufficient to identify the market. Internal and external marketing are essential to success, especially during the start-up phase.

**Internal Marketing.** Students need to be fully informed, in advance, about the format(s) of the courses in which they enroll. This need has system-wide implications. For example, course listings and numberings should clearly indicate course format (similar to the OL designation that is in effect for fully online courses).

**External Marketing.** The College’s marketing strategy has, to date, not highlighted technology. For successful implementation of online and blended programs, the College will need to develop a strategy for targeting new audiences. As a College, online courses should be advertised heavily on the main web site as well as on the web sites of the individual schools.

#### College-Wide Action Steps:

- Marketing will work with the schools and Web Services to develop strategies for increasing Simmons’s visibility in online learning sectors and for marketing to the

needs and interests of potential students, including expanding into Web 2.0 sectors such as Facebook and Second Life.

- The Registrar will create a BL course code so that blended courses can be easily identified by prospective students and tallied by the College.
- Marketing will work with the schools to develop strategies for marketing and recruiting students for blended courses/programs. They will also poll Sloan Localness grant recipients to identify promising marketing practices that are in use at institutions that offer blended learning.

4. A **cost model** should be incorporated into each school's model for blended course development and support. The model needs to be comprehensive and include costs that are borne centrally as well as those borne within the school

Each school will likely have a different model for support of blended courses/programs. However, it is important to be able to calculate the costs associated with each phase of blended course development and support. An added concern is that course/program development is an iterative process with a life cycle that should be expected to span 3-5 fiscal years. In the case of converting individual courses into blended format, this is unlikely to pose a significant problem, but at a minimum, systems need to be in place to monitor the financial viability of new programs.

College-Wide Action Steps:

- In developing a course/program business case, each school will calculate anticipated income streams and costs associated with:
  - enrollment,
  - needs analysis,
  - marketing and recruitment,
  - faculty/staff professional development,
  - market competitive faculty compensation for course development/redesign,
  - program staffing,
  - instructors and other course facilitator salaries (based on a 1:17-20 student/teacher ratio as per policy section explanation)
  - technical needs that extend beyond that which is centrally available,
  - instructional design and instructional technology consultation on course development,
  - course development,
  - course/program assessment,
  - course revision, and
  - a four-to-five year lifecycle prior to the next redesign.
- Business cases need to specify how these costs will be covered and by whom the costs will be born.

## C. Institutional Policies

1. Define and author clear **copyright** guidelines regarding the faculty use of scholarly articles, as well as images, video and other digital media. The policy should clearly address questions of "fair use" as well as valid avenues for obtaining copyright permissions. Student guidelines should also be articulated and included as a standard section in all blended courses.

In addition, Simmons should review and revise **intellectual property** policies that make clear what is owned by the College, what is owned by the course author, and what is owned by the students. Consideration should be given for recent developments in IP law and policy, including alternatives, such as Creative Commons licensing.

Note: While copyright and intellectual property policies may appear to be analogous, in reality these policies are at two ends of a spectrum of creation and use. In this context, "intellectual property" refers to the rights that authors, including students, have the right to assert over the materials that they create. "Copyright" refers to respect and fair compensation for the use of materials created by others.

Simmons's copyright policy is located online at:

<http://my.simmons.edu/services/technology/policies/copyright.shtml>

Simmons's current intellectual property policy is online at

<http://my.simmons.edu/policies/ipo.shtml>

College-Wide Action Steps:

- College Counsel convenes a cross-campus working group needs to be formed to review and update the institution's intellectual property guidelines. This process will include an external scan of institutions with exemplary policies (e.g. Duke University and Penn State).
- Upon completion of these revisions, College Counsel mounts an awareness campaign that includes print and web materials as well as community events.

Technology Action Steps:

- A working group has been formed (5/07) to review and update these institutional copyright policy in light of changes in the law and to better reflect the needs of Simmons faculty and students.
- ATC revisit the length of time that course materials can legally be available to students in the LMS in light of the TEACH act and UMass Online policies.

2. Draft policies, set college-wide expectations, and provide resources for addressing the **accessibility** needs of students, staff, and faculty in relationship to blended courses.

The theme of accessibility best practices needs constant attention from the Simmons community. In addition, accessibility resources and best practices are in an ongoing state of change. Therefore, policies need to be regularly revised and updated.

College-Wide Action Steps:

- The ADA compliance officer convenes a working group to craft a College-wide policy on accessibility in blended courses offered by Simmons. The policy addresses: web design (linking, tables, etc.), video captioning, audio transcripts, text formatting standards such as use of headers, use of color and contrast. The policy also provides guidelines for institutional support and cost.

#### Technology Action Steps:

- Once guidelines are in place, Academic Technology and the Center for Academic Achievement develop/revise resources, make tools available, implement internal marketing campaigns, and provide professional development opportunities for faculty and staff.

#### 3. Articulate and ensure achievement of college-wide and program-specific **student fluencies**.

Student fluencies for blended learning should reflect those that are identified for the broader perspective of technology and information literacy. Since a college-wide discussion of these will begin with the Student Fluency Task Force, at this point it might be best to identify issues that need to be considered.

#### College-Wide Action Steps:

- If they haven't done so already, by fall 08 schools will have a method in place for achieving baseline student fluency.

#### Technology Action Steps:

- ATC is in the process of identifying the student fluency policies that schools have in place.

#### 4. Ensure adequate **faculty compensation and professional recognition** for blended course development and teaching.

For the promise of blended learning to be fully realized at Simmons, and for the institution to retain its faculty, an equitable system for compensation and work recognition needs to be in place at each school. Compensation should take into account the fact that, during the first few semesters in which a blended course is taught, the work associated with a blended course is the equivalent of 1.5-2 courses<sup>1</sup>. In addition, while reduced "seat time" may make it possible to accommodate large enrollment, blended courses are also text-intensive so that the process of reading and response takes time. Therefore, we recommend a ratio of no more than 17-20 students to one instructor (or instructor plus teaching assistants/moderators).

Finally, only a few faculty are likely to take on the additional work associated with blended teaching if it is not factored into promotion and tenure consideration. Because the makeup of tenure review committees will change over the years, it is important to make recognition for teaching with technology explicit in the written Tenure and Promotion policies of each school.

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<sup>1</sup> See "The Impact of Online Teaching on Faculty Load" ([http://www.itdl.org/journal/Jan\\_04/article04.htm](http://www.itdl.org/journal/Jan_04/article04.htm)), "Faculty participation in asynchronous learning networks: A case study of motivating and inhibiting factors" ([http://www.aln.org/publications/jaln/v4n1/pdf/v4n1\\_schifter.pdf](http://www.aln.org/publications/jaln/v4n1/pdf/v4n1_schifter.pdf)), "Factors influencing faculty participation in distance education in postsecondary education in the United States: An institutional study" (<http://www.westga.edu/~distance/betts13.html>), "Distributed Learning Impact Evaluation" (<http://rite.ucf.edu/impactevaluation.htm>), and "Faculty Satisfaction with Online Teaching: Administrative Support" ([http://www.sloan-c-wiki.org/wiki/index.php?title=Faculty\\_Satisfaction](http://www.sloan-c-wiki.org/wiki/index.php?title=Faculty_Satisfaction)).

College-Wide Action Steps:

- During the initial phase of the blended learning initiative (3-5 years), the deans have agreed that faculty will receive an additional \$3,000 for blended course development and an additional \$2,000 (above base pay) the first time that they teach a newly-revised/developed blended course. Typically, course release will not be offered – however, sabbatical leave may be used for blended course redesign/development. This incentive will be revisited after the first three years and it is anticipated that within five years blended teaching will be an assumed part of the faculty role and teaching load, to be determined within each college.
- The deans have agreed to explicitly recognize excellence in blended teaching in promotion and tenure deliberation (for example, blended teaching would be listed as an example of innovative teaching, or blended course authorship would “count” as the equivalent of a book chapter).
- The deans have agreed to explicitly recognize peer mentoring as a form of community service in promotion and tenure deliberation.
- The deans have agreed that blended course redesign and development would be a considered as a legitimate project to work on during sabbatical leave.
- Moving forward, schools agree to periodically update their benchmark research and ensure market-competitive rates for faculty compensation on blended course development, redesign, and teaching. If desired, Academic Technology can provide assistance with this benchmarking research.

5. **Provide an infrastructure** that can accommodate, as well as reap the benefits of, the flexible scheduling and support associated with blended courses.

Blended courses will help transcend the space limitations associated with Simmons’s urban campus. However, this will increase the complexity of already over-taxed systems such as registration and scheduling. Simmons needs to anticipate increased demand for complex and flexible space assignments.

College-Wide Action Steps:

- The Office of the Registrar, Technology, and Student Financial Services, are working together to outline services and policies for supporting blended courses.