Faculty Task Force on Email Response Time in Online Courses

A. Background

- **Purpose of the Email Response Protocol**
  (1) To guide student and instructor expectations into a common time frame.
  (2) To maintain faculty responsibility for applying "normal" email response times to a variety of different and changing circumstances.

- **Current Protocol**: "The instructor will normally respond to student email inquiries within 24 to 36 hours. Students will be notified if this rule has to be suspended temporarily because of illness or other unforeseen circumstances." (Applies to all course formats)

- **Why a Review**? The protocol was adopted at a time when the overwhelming majority of online courses were taught in a 15 week format. With online course delivery increased in other formats and new instructors coming in, a review of the response protocol became necessary.

- **The Faculty Taskforce.** The Office of Distance Learning asked faculty for volunteers with experience in teaching different course formats to serve on a Faculty Task Force that would review the response protocol. Fourteen Full-time and Adjunct Online Faculty volunteered.

- **Membership:** Kelly Bolcik, Rhonda Fulton, Jurgen Hilke, Gary Hull, Donna Lane, Rhonda Martin, Corwin Parker, Tracy Parker, Rob Rock, Danny Rumpf, Cathy Spence, Gail Spessert, Danielle Stoffer, Vivienne Werner, Tanya Zink.

- **How did the Group Work?**
  (1) An initial survey by email
  (2) In-person meeting on 3/31/11 to discuss the survey results and draft a recommendation (seven were able to attend).
  (3) Sent the draft recommendation around by email for approval of the group.

- **Three Options were considered:**
  1. The current email policy should be applied to all course formats from J-Term up to 15-week.
  2. The current email policy should be applied to course formats from 7-week to 15-week.
     For formats from J-Term to 6-weeks an instructor response time of [?] hours.
  3. The current email policy should be applied to course formats from 9-week to 15-week.
     For formats from 6-week to 8-weeks an instructor response time of [??] hours.
     For formats from J-Term to 5-weeks an instructor response time of [??] hours.

B. Action: Approve Protocol:

"The instructor will normally respond to student email inquiries within the following timeframes
- *For 9 to15 week course formats within 24 to 36 hours.*
- *For 5 to 8 week course formats within 18 to 24 hours*
- *For J-Term to 3 week course formats within 12-14 hours*
Instructors will notify students of any arrangements specific for weekends. Instructors will notify students if the normal response time has to be modified temporarily because of illness or other unforeseen circumstances."

LLC approved May 4, 2011