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UNH FACULTY SENATE MOTION # XVI-M16 on e-courses

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UNH FACULTY SENATE
MOTION # XVI-M16

on e-courses

1. Motion presenter: Michael Ferber
2. Dates of Faculty Senate discussion: 4/2/2012 and 4/16/2012
3. Rationale:

The number of on-line courses (e-courses) at the university has been growing exponentially during the last three years, and e-courses now represent a significant proportion of all courses taught. About twenty e-courses were offered in the January term of 2011, and forty-six were offered in 2012. About thirty such courses were offered during the summers of 2010 and 2011, while at least sixty-five are planned for this summer. There are new initiatives from the administration to promote e-courses, such as "e-meritus" courses to be taught by professors emeriti or emeritae and the offering of "e-lecturers," who will teach only e-courses, to departments willing to expand the number of such courses. Indeed the overall expansion of on-line courses is due mainly to decisions by the administration. This expansion has not come from any duly-constituted body of professors, except insofar as some departments have chosen to promote e-courses or at least allow them. It is true that many students want to take such courses; and quite a few professors, lecturers, and adjuncts have asked to teach them. However, the prime motive behind the administration's promotion of these courses seems to be financial: they make money. The administration has not even argued, as far as the committee is aware, that on-line courses are superior to traditional courses or even their equal, in educational benefit.

The committee is not prejudging the quality of on-line courses here. Some of them may well be excellent; and we are aware that several experienced professors have been teaching them, at least to try them out. We recognize that all UNH colleges have offered training sessions for faculty interested in teaching e-courses. Every year brings new developments in technology, and we can only guess at what new programs and devices might enhance the pedagogical possibilities of e-courses just a few years from now. However, there has been a good deal of controversy about the e-courses' quality and about their long-term impact on the nature and structure of university education. There has been much debate as well about their effect on the position of professors. These questions, as far as we can tell, have not been thoroughly discussed by any university-wide body of professors, other instructors, and administrators; and many departments have yet to hold a meeting about this. Little is said about e-courses in the Strategic Plan.

4. Motion:

We therefore make a motion with three parts:

- (1) We call on the administration to make known what it foresees as the role and scope of e-courses. Is there a plan? Does the administration foresee expanding e-courses to a certain point and then pausing? What is that point?**
- (2) We call on the administration**

to sponsor jointly with the Faculty Senate a series of open forums starting this spring and continuing next fall in which the pros and cons of on-line teaching are debated. (3) We ask all departments that have not yet done so to hold discussions in which the value of e-courses and their role in department curricula are thoroughly considered.

5. Senate action: passed unanimously.

6. Senate chair's signature: JJ Puller

Forwarded to: President Mark Huddleston, on 4/24/2012

Forwarded to: Provost John Aber, on 4/24/2012

Forwarded to: Lisa MacFarlane, Senior Vice Provost for Academic Affairs, on 4/24/2012