Proposals Being Sought for New Online Course Offerings

University Communications
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The Office of Instruction and Assessment [1] has launched an Online Education Project [2] it hopes will create more than 30 new online classes.

The department is soliciting proposal submissions from UA instructors who are interested in learning how to design an online course, with plans to administer enough grants to fund at least 30 new online or hybrid courses. The money will come mainly from the latest increase in student IT fees, which took effect this semester. The submission deadline is 5 p.m. Oct. 31.

Running an online or hybrid class is more than just dumping all the course materials online, said Debra Tomanek [3], assistant vice provost for instruction and assessment.

"(Online teaching) pushes professors to create more learning activities that students can complete outside of lectures," she said. "That's better for learning, and it's a better model of teaching. What we're prepared to do is help them build these things into their courses."

Hybrid courses are those for which students physically attend class only part of the time, conducting the rest of the coursework via the Internet.

This semester, 2,583 students are enrolled in 360 hybrid classes, and 9,153 students are enrolled in 576 fully online classes.

According to the request for proposals, only a pre-existing UA course suitable for development as an online or hybrid course is eligible for funding. The course must hold a durable position in the program curriculum, meaning if the instructor who develops the course discontinues teaching it, it will still be offered in its new form by the department. The course developed in the project will be submitted to a peer review process. The project leader must be a UA faculty member, instructor or lecturer.

For instructors whose proposals are accepted, there's required face-to-face training.

"Faculty members can benefit from working with the OIA to learn how to do this well," Tomanek said.

And students benefit because hybrid and online classes free up seats in traditional classes, enabling departments to offer more sections of those classes and hopefully allowing more students to graduate in four years.
With the Online Education Project, there's potential to add new online courses for graduate students as well as undergrads, if the Office of Instruction and Assessment receives good proposals for courses at both levels.

Once proposals are accepted, the courses would be developed during the spring semester, with some being offered this summer and others in the fall or winter sessions.

Tomanek said the cost to create an online course varies. Someone must be paid for their time to build the course, and sometimes it takes more money if new podcasts or lectures need to be recorded. And, finally, it takes salary money to hire someone to teach the course once it has been developed.

Chief Information Officer Michele Norin said part of negotiating the student IT fee increase was a commitment to an increase in online course offerings.

The $125 fee increase went into effect this semester, bringing the fee total to $280.

Her greatest hope for the new grant program, Norin said, is "for students to be able to recognize and utilize the online classes as options so they can complete their degrees on time or sooner."

An additional benefit to taking these kinds of courses is the technical proficiency that students gain, she said.

"I don't know a job out there that doesn't use a computing device," Norin said.

Online learning was the seventh-highest priority for students who responded to last year's annual IT Student Advisory Board survey, Paul Reeves, advisory board chairman, wrote in an email.

Even so, only 16.1 percent of those surveyed reported being enrolled in at least one completely online class during the fall semester, an increase of 5.1 percent from the previous year, he said.

Comments? Send them to lqp@email.arizona.edu. Emails must be sent from UA or UA Foundation accounts. Please include your full name and title.

Source URL: https://uaatwork.arizona.edu/lqp/proposals-being-sought-new-online-course-offerings

Links:
[2] http://oia.arizona.edu/content/online-education-project-rfp
[3] http://ltc.arizona.edu/content/debra-tomanek-ph-d
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