


**RESPONSES FROM INSTITUTIONS:  
COURSE CONTENT ACCOUNTABILITY**

**FOR PRESENTATION AT THE  
SEPTEMBER 6-7, 2012, MEETING OF  
THE BOARD OF REGENTS**

To: Dan Klaich, Chancellor  
Scott Wasserman, Chief of Staff to the Board of Regents

From: Neal Smatresk, President 

Subject: Course Content Accountability

Date: July 27, 2012

UNLV policy requires each faculty member to prepare and distribute a course syllabus to students for each course section, and it leaves to each faculty member a choice of available methods to post or distribute the syllabus and other course materials. To promote openness and accountability, UNLV facilitates the appropriate distribution of course syllabi and materials via several options, including, (1) hard copy handed out to students; (2) posting via UNLV's WebCT course management system; and/or (3) posting to the faculty member's department or personal UNLV faculty web page. The method of posting is communicated to the students. In many department offices, syllabi are collected and archived for student and public inspection.

UNLV has established minimum criteria for syllabi that include course learning outcomes, required or recommended reading materials, course assignments and due dates and grading rubrics and policies. Course proposals are reviewed by department, college and university curriculum committees to make sure that courses are consistent expectations for instructional mission of the institution. Course and program level assessments are conducted annually to evaluate student attainment of learning outcomes.

Consistent with NSHE Code, Title 4, Chapter 12, Section 2(3), syllabi and course materials are defined as copyrightable works and the intellectual property of the faculty member. UNLV interprets NSHE Code Title 4, Chapter 12, Section 3 – Significant Use – to mean that generation of course syllabi and materials are not a significant use of System resources and therefore these materials are not created as works for hire. With respect for the NSHE Code, methods of distribution and posting of syllabi is left to the discretion of the faculty member.

In Fall 2013, UNLV will be adopting an improved online course management system (Blackboard) that will improve access to course materials.

UNLV complies with System Common Course Numbering policies, has in place an array of mechanisms to evaluate courses with respect to their quality and consistency with mission, and provides capability for students and members of the community to look up and compare course descriptions and content through a CollegeSource Online license.



## **University of Nevada, Reno Course Content Accountability Response (24 July 2012)**

Academic faculty of the university are responsible for developing and delivering courses and curricula that are in keeping with current disciplinary best practice and that contribute to the fulfillment of the department, college and university missions. There are several policies and practices in place to ensure faculty are meeting these responsibilities.

The course syllabus is considered the foundation document for a course, and guidelines and a template for exemplary syllabi are available in multiple locations on the university website. The guidelines recommend that syllabi include standard information such as course objectives, learning outcomes, instructor contact information, course schedule, and grading criteria. Prior to the start of each the school year, the provost reminds faculty by e-mail of the need to provide a syllabus to every student as the class begins and provides links to resources for syllabus preparation. It is standard practice to provide a syllabus to each student during the first week of class. Multiple methods for providing syllabi and other class information to students are currently utilized. These include the posting of syllabi on WebCampus, providing a print syllabus and sending syllabi electronically by e-mail. Many faculty members maintain course web pages and post their syllabi there.

The MyNevada website provides public access to information on university classes. Information available without login includes course titles, descriptions, instructors, texts and materials and open sections. Some of this information is also available on other university websites, such as the ASUN Bookstore, Curriculum Central and Academic Central.

The Instructional Design Team emphasizes the importance of posting the syllabus as the foundation for online or blended courses and indicates that faculty compliance in doing so is very high. Training sessions, online video tutorials and printed instructions on syllabi preparation are also provided. The first item on the WebCampus course menu shell is "Syllabus," and instructors are also urged to post class assignments, reserve readings and grades on WebCampus. For online and independent learning classes, an up-to-date syllabus is required for every class. That division also provides a "best practices" document and an "Instructor Idea Exchange" document with valuable guidelines for preparation of online syllabi.

Faculty members developing new courses must use a university template for the proposal, with a course syllabus, library assessment form and Common Course Numbering form being required attachments. The university shares undergraduate course syllabi with other NSHE institutions in the Common Course Numbering approval process. Course proposals must be approved by department faculty, the college curriculum committee and the University Courses and Curricula Committee. If the proposed course would be in the Core Curriculum, the relevant disciplinary subcommittee reviews the proposal, with final approval of the full Core Board. Finally, graduate courses must be approved by the Graduate Council.

The Academic Standards Committee of the Faculty Senate monitors, conducts studies and makes recommendations on matters related to academics such as admissions standards, grading practices, degree requirements and academic status.

External reviewers for academic program reviews and specialized accreditations routinely look at a program's curriculum and course content through a review of course syllabi, and offer recommendations for improvement. Courses that will be used for teacher licensure are also submitted for state approval. Core Curriculum subcommittees periodically review courses for compliance with the Core requirements for that distributional area.

Faculty annual evaluation and progress toward tenure reviews utilize multiple measures of assessing teaching effectiveness, including review of student evaluations, teaching methods and teaching materials such as syllabi, course assignments and supplemental instructional materials. Evidence that a course is not being taught in alignment with best practices or departmental standards leads to the faculty member being directed to revise the course.

The University Courses & Curricula Committee recently reviewed and discussed a policy setting forth the minimum expectations for a syllabus and approved its being added to the University Administrative Manual. This policy has received final approval and is in the process of being added to the manual.



## MEMORANDUM

**To:** Dan Klaich, Chancellor  
Scott G. Wasserman, Chief of Staff to the Board of Regents

**From:** Bart Patterson, President

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'BP', is written over the name 'Bart Patterson'.

**Subject:** Course Content Accountability Response

**Date:** July 17, 2012

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Every course offered at Nevada State is linked to an online course shell that includes learning materials, a grade book and online discussion boards. All faculty are required to post a syllabus prior to the start of the semester and individual departments audit each course section to ensure compliance. All campus syllabi identify class expectations, including assignments, grading guidelines, schedules, and required reading materials. Furthermore, students are able to purchase physical and electronic textbooks online or in person well in advance of the semester start. With the addition of our new learning management system in the spring, students will receive email alerts and text messages in real time as new materials are posted within their courses.

As part of our commitment to improving the consistency and quality of our courses, we have launched a new “SuperCourse” initiative that will provide more structured instructional support to adjunct faculty. These new “SuperCourses” leverage the instructional skills of our finest full-time faculty to establish the core elements of courses, including engaging learning materials, carefully designed activities, and assessments that challenge students to critically examine and apply their knowledge and skills. This foundation, in turn, liberates adjunct faculty to invest more time in student interaction, the provision of detailed graded feedback, and the further development of effective teaching practices.

The high quality of teaching on the NSC campus is founded on the individual strengths of the academic faculty and their ability to design and deliver innovative and engaging curricula. The development of individual courses and programs of study are driven by the mission of the institution, our commitment to active learning and our service to a unique student population and the surrounding community.

Consistent with the standards established by the NWCCU, NSC has a thorough and iterative curricular approval process that engages a wide number of campus constituents and culminates with approval by the academic departments, the faculty senate curriculum committee, common course numbering constituents, and the Office of the Provost. The purpose and courses yielded by this process are updated annually in our college catalog, which is publicly available on NSC’s website.

As part of our comprehensive Assessment of Student Learning program, all degree programs on campus clearly identify measureable student learning outcomes and every course syllabus identifies course objectives, learning outcomes and assignments. Data acquired from the assessment of student learning outcomes is available on our website.

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT




Office of the President

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**MEMORANDUM**

**TO:** Daniel Klaich  
Chancellor, Nevada System of Higher Education

**FROM:** Michael D. Richards 

**DATE:** July 24, 2012

**SUBJECT:** Course Content Accountability

The College of Southern Nevada employs several mechanisms to ensure accountability for course content:

1. Course syllabus policy which outlines all required material to be contained in a course syllabus
2. Course syllabi from our career and technical education programs, approximately 100+, are reviewed, at least annually, by business and industry advisory groups from the local community.
3. Course syllabi from our career and technical education programs, approximately 100+, are reviewed, at least annually, by Joint Technical Skills Committees in collaboration with Clark County School District.
4. Academic Deans are responsible for maintaining the repository of all course syllabi for courses offered in their respective School.
5. Faculty are encouraged to post syllabi in the learning management system prior to the start of an academic semester.
6. Faculty are encouraged to post syllabi on departmental and/or program web pages for student access prior to the start of a semester.
7. Campus bookstore operates an online textbook ordering system that allows students to identify required texts, anticipated costs of textbooks, and placement of orders for textbooks electronically.
8. Common Course Numbering in NSHE ensures course content to be consistent among all institutions for transferability of the course within the System.

If additional information is needed to validate any of the above, please do not hesitate to contact my office.



## Response by GBC, Course Content Responsibility

1. What are current practices in posting publicly available syllabi, assignments, activities, reading materials, and other course materials? **GBC:** Mostly for concerns of intellectual property, GBC has no requirement for the publically available posting of syllabi or any of the other items listed in this question. However, many individual faculty members voluntarily post their syllabi on public departmental websites. Providing accurate syllabi for students is required by at least the first class meeting. Some online or online-enhanced classes will have the course syllabus posted and available within Web Campus before the class begins.
2. What problems are experienced in regard to item 1 and what problems are foreseen with increased timely posting of such items (understanding that it's more challenging to post a full semester of assignments for a cutting-edge graduate seminar course than for a standard freshman service course)? **GBC:** No significant problems have been experienced and none are foreseen, pending the exact definition of "increased timely posting." The first class meeting is considered a timely delivery of a syllabus and course expectations to a class. It is unreasonable to expect the posting of all assignments before the beginning of a class. The time immediately before the beginning of a class is generally used for creating the exact assignments, and the flexibility to adjust a class as it progresses is needed for effective instruction. All classes should be "cutting edge." Faculty are currently accountable for their classes, as assessed by themselves and evaluated by their peers and supervisors.
3. Institutional leaders and faculty should publicly recognize and appreciate the potential benefits of the measures in item 1 in communicating clearly with the public and students to avoid or clear up misunderstandings and to inspire confidence by us being forthcoming. **GBC:** There have been no misunderstandings of any consequence. Expression of lack of confidence has similarly been rare to nonexistent in any manner that would be rectified by the early posting measures listed.
4. Since we are now student-centered and want to show our accountability and effectiveness and embrace performance-based review, etc. how might posting and other public disclosure before, during and after the fact be used to promote the goals mentioned in the agenda item text and this email, especially to allow students and the public to gauge our institutional effectiveness? **GBC:** As an accredited institution of higher learning, GBC has always been student-centered, accountable, and effective. **GBC hires experts – the faculty – to develop and monitor all instruction for appropriate and rigorous content.** All appropriate materials are presented at times appropriate to conduct classes effectively. Classes are assessed. Going beyond what is currently required would be detraction from effective teaching.
5. What benefits might proposals in this area have in helping standardization of offerings subject to the common course numbering system to assure and maybe improve the quality of those offerings? **GBC:** Discipline meetings of NSHE institutions have been held to generally determine the standard content of courses found in the NSHE Common Course Numbering system. Ongoing assessment assures quality and improvement.
6. What problems, if any, might such proposals raise for entrepreneurial academic diversification and improvements of our offerings? **GBC:** To address this question, the terms used would need to be more clearly defined in the context used.
7. How do our new IT initiatives enable or extend our capacity to make this information more easily, widely and freely available to our students and the public? What changes or improvements would be helpful in that regard? **GBC:** The technology available now is sufficient for anything suggested in the items above. The question is how the technology and related support resources should most effectively be used, and would this be worth the investment of those resources? The time and resources required to follow up on the items mentioned would be bureaucratic detractions from effective teaching.
8. What other issues, problems, etc., are raised by such proposals? What other ideas are there to promote the policy goals that are mentioned in the agenda description? What are the recommendations? **GBC:** It is not clear what the problem is that is to be addressed by all of this. These questions and proposals seem to be promoting the addition of a large layer of work for little benefit in addressing an obscure problem.



## OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

To: Chancellor Klaich  
CC: Scott Wasserman, Chief of Staff to the Board of Regents  
From: María C. Sheehan, President *María C. Sheehan*  
Date: July 23, 2012  
Re: Course Content Accountability Response

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Many TMCC faculty members maintain webpages on which they post their syllabus, assignments and activities, but they are not required to do so. Most high-volume, multi-section courses at TMCC have a common syllabus and textbooks, though individual instructors can adapt and modify the common syllabus to suit their approach to the course material. Specific assignments are generally left to the individual instructor's discretion and may or may not be posted on their webpage. Copies of every syllabus from every instructor, full and part-time, are collected each semester and stored in a shared drive accessible to all faculty in the same division, but not to students or the public.

Information on required textbooks is available to the general public through the TMCC bookstore.

Each of our courses has an established set of student learning outcomes. These outcomes are consistent, and do not vary regardless of who teaches the course, what textbook is used, or what assignments are given. All courses and programs are regularly assessed to ensure that their learning outcomes are being met, and curricular changes are introduced as needed based on the assessment results.

Our course outcomes are accessible to the general public via the MCO (Master Course Outline) link on the College's website (<https://webapps.tmcc.edu/acdmcs/mco/>). Through this link, the public can see the course description and student learning outcomes for every course currently offered at TMCC.

Our accreditation standards require that we assess student learning outcomes for all of our courses and programs. The results of our course and program assessments are available on the College website at [www.tmcc.edu/assessment](http://www.tmcc.edu/assessment).



## OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

### MEMORANDUM

To: Dan Klaich, Chancellor  
Scott G. Wasserman, Chief of Staff to the Board of Regents

From: Carol Lucey, President *Carol Lucey*

Subject: Course Content Accountability Response

Date: June 14, 2012

Consistent with the requirements of NWCCU and the common course numbering agreements with NSHE, WNC establishes and delivers course content aligned with the mission of the institution. Students are offered courses in general education, degree requirements, job readiness, and elective areas that support professional and personal education objectives.

The institution practices an open development of course content, as well as certificate and degree recommendations and eliminations. The college curriculum committee approves all degrees, as well as the courses required for those degrees. Division chairs require course outlines and syllabi for every WNC course. Instructors have been offered professional development opportunities for both the development and on-going improvement of all courses.

With the recent hiring of a college webmaster, posting all course outlines and syllabi in one area of the college webpage will become much easier. The college has spent the past year educating faculty and staff on the use of the new student registration/information system. We are looking forward to the coming year with the expectation that the online system can be used with a much greater level of ease by both faculty and students.

WNC students can order textbooks, both on-line from the college bookstore or from several other available on-line sources. They can also purchase/rent copies of the required textbooks in person at two campus bookstore sites. Assignments should be clear to all enrolled students. Attendance requirements and grading policies are also included in on-line course syllabi.

In an effort to ensure the highest academic standards, I am pleased to report that we have created a college academic standards committee. This committee, taking effect this fall 2012, will address best practices and review academic excellence, not only in the classroom and the academic curriculum, but also in the policies and practice of academic and student services issues that affect the faculty, our students, and our communities.