

Office Hours Pilot Program For Teaching Online

The pilot approved by West Chester University management and local APSCUF is hereby extended through the 2016-2017 academic year.



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Date

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Background

The APSCUF CBA requires teaching faculty to be available in their offices for a minimum of five office hours spread over three days. With the advent of online classes, a Distance Education article (Article 42) was added to the CBA through the negotiation process. Article 42 does not provide for any modification of office hours for faculty teaching online classes, so the current practice is that the standard office hour requirement applies for faculty teaching online. That notwithstanding, it is evident that faculty teaching online classes frequently interact with students outside of the traditional office hour model. The purpose of this pilot is to experiment with alternative options for office hours for faculty who teach one or more online classes.

Proposal

1. This is a limited term pilot that provides greater office hour flexibility for faculty teaching online classes. The pilot will begin spring, 2016 and conclude at the end of the fall, 2016 semester.
2. Faculty participating in the pilot will have the option meet their minimum office hour requirement by substituting one virtual office hour for a traditional office hour for each online class taught, up to a total of three of the minimum of five office hours.
3. Virtual office hours do not have to be conducted in the office of the faculty member. They can be conducted at another campus location or at a location away from the campus. Virtual office hours must be conducted at an announced time and can include the option of being available to respond to emails within the period of the office hour or conducting a face-to-face or voice-to-voice session with one or more student(s) through D2L or using some other technology announced in the syllabus and on published department lists. Participating faculty would provide the department office with an active phone number. Should they need to be reached during scheduled office hours a student could contact the department office if they are unable to get a response and the office would call the faculty member directly.
4. A faculty member offering a virtual office hour shall hold office hours on three different days, and hold traditional office hours on campus on a minimum of two days.
5. Departments or programs that participate in the pilot must be selected from a variety of programs with multiple online course offerings in each of the colleges. This is to allow for a range of experiences that will ultimately serve as a basis for assessment of the pilot. Faculty within the participating department or program would be able to opt in to the pilot voluntarily. If a faculty member finds that the virtual office hours are not working for them, they could withdraw from the pilot after the course ends (so as not to change the syllabus on students).
6. Faculty members selected for the pilot agree to participate in an outcomes assessment process at the end of the semester in which he or she participated. The assessment process will include a review of the effectiveness of the virtual office hours by participating faculty, their department chair, and by the students in the online classes that were designated as part of the pilot. All students in the designated online classes will be invited to participate in the assessment regardless of whether they actually took advantage of virtual office hours. Local APSCUF and Management will agree in advance on the evaluation instrument to be used in the assessment. Assessment data would be collected from students, faculty, and department chairs during the week following submission of grades. The data would be analyzed after 2 semesters.
7. If problems emerge from the pilot or assessment, the approach would be to try and resolve the mechanism of virtual office hours, rather than to impose discipline on the faculty member.