

TO: Faculty Senate Steering Committee
FROM: Academic Quality Committee (AQC)
CC: Susan Jeffords, Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs; Cindy Baccar,
Associate Vice Provost and University Registrar
DATE: 5/30/21
RE: Attend Anywhere; Questions, Concerns, Recommendations

Although the initiative to create an "Attend Anywhere" (AA) course designation is motivated by a desire to provide a more flexible and accommodating environment for students to take classes through PSU, the Academic Quality Committee (AQC) has several concerns. Even if the AA option is running as a pilot in a few courses at instructor/departmental request, its formal designation as a course delivery method through a registration code has broader implications for PSU's academic community. The AQC submits this memo to generate a discussion and to request addressing these concerns, where applicable, before the AA pilot courses begin in the fall and before the AA option expands beyond the pilot program.

Many of our concerns relate to the pedagogical quality of the learning environment created in AA courses and the impact on student success. Specifically:

- It is unclear whether giving options regarding *type of attendance* is pedagogically sound, and if so, in which contexts?
- Other than convenience for the student, how is learning maintained or improved through AA instruction?
- What impact will an in-person classroom community and a remote classroom community have on individual students and the learning community as a whole?
- The division of students in two groups creates serious pedagogical inequities with regard to learning styles, circumstances, and other issues. How will such inequities be addressed?
- How will high-impact practices (HIPS) be incorporated into AA courses?
- How will issues that arise from broadcasting (i.e., zooming) a course be addressed? Examples of such issues include student privacy and the ability of students to participate freely.
- We know from the literature that supporting student identity and belonging are key to student persistence. It seems likely that AA will erode rather than strengthen a student's sense of place at PSU.

We are also concerned about the impact on instructors especially with regard to preparing material for dual modalities and managing a class that is both in-person and remote simultaneously. For example, we know from the shift to remote that not everything that works in a classroom works on Zoom, and vice-versa. Will faculty need to plan their courses and classroom activities for two different types of audiences? Or will faculty simply lecture or do some kind of low student-input activity, given the potential logistical challenges of handling the two different groups? If so, then why have a synchronous meeting to begin with?

Another set of concerns regard the expense of the visible and invisible infrastructure required of AA courses. It is important to recognize that the added workload of faculty undertaking AA

courses comes at the expense of other demands on faculty time. Similarly, the investment and maintenance of technology needed for AA courses are financial resources, including one-time CARES Act funds, that will not be available for other technology needs.

The AQC recommends a more measured approach to pursuing the development of AA courses that includes a faculty-led process to scrutinize the implementation and evaluation of AA. In addition to considering the above concerns and others that arise, we strongly recommend:

- the creation of an evaluation plan to evaluate the effectiveness of AA pilot courses and any additional AA courses in the future that includes analysis of their impact on student success.
- that the unintended consequences of giving students this choice should be explored thoroughly, including potential inequities.
- identifying what support, and at what expense, instructors teaching AA courses will need.
- ensuring that there is sufficient oversight at the department level for these courses during their implementation and evaluation of their efficacy.
- developing a set of broad principles and guidelines to guide departments regarding AA courses to help ensure consistent pedagogical practices are followed.

We appreciate that the Office of Academic Innovation has been interviewing faculty regarding AA and we recognize that some of these concerns may be well on their way to being addressed. However, if that is the case, the members of the AQC are not aware of them, indicating that a broader inclusion of faculty in the process is in order.