TO: Faculty Senate Steering Committee
FROM: Academic Quality Committee (AQC)
DATE: 5/19/23
RE: Attend Anywhere; Questions, Concerns, Recommendations

Near the end of the 2020-21 academic year (AY), the Academic Quality Committee (AQC) submitted a memo to the Faculty Senate Steering Committee expressing our concerns regarding the offering of Attend Anywhere (AA) courses beginning Fall 2021. In September 2022, the Office of Academic Innovation (OAI) published the *Remote Synchronous & Attend Anywhere Pilot Program Assessment*. The OAI report provides valuable insight into aspects of student and faculty experience with AA courses during the 2021-22AY.

The rationale for a quick rollout of AA courses provided by the Office of Academic Affairs (OAA) in spring 2021 was that returning to campus in the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic necessitated providing the most flexible course modality for students. Notably, overall the report findings do not support running courses as AA rather than as remote synchronous.

Key Findings
AA was underutilized by a significant majority of students enrolled in AA courses. While 74% of students reported that "the option to attend class sessions in person or remotely had a positive impact on their success in the class," most students used AA as a remote option only. Faculty reported that 85% of students attended the class remotely. It is unclear in the report how the remaining 15% is comprised (e.g., attended mostly in-person, a combination, absences, students who never attended or dropped the course). The report findings show that in practice, most students enrolled in an AA course chose to attend online (i.e., remote synchronous). Thus it is not a surprise that committee members whose programs offered AA courses noted that many faculty switched from AA to remote synchronous after the term began because very few students attended in person.

Many of AQC's concerns related to issues of student success. The report presents faculty and student perceptions of student success rather than objective metrics of student success; such as DWF rates, retention, time spent accessing online materials in CANVAS. Also, we would like to highlight that 56% of faculty reported a negative impact and 27% perceived no impact. Only 17% of faculty perceived a positive impact. Having only 17% of the faculty that responded identifying a positive impact is an indicator of the significant limitations of the AA modality.

Students were asked about the benefits of AA in regards to their learning. Thirty four percent listed a decrease in their commuting to PSU, 29% named the ability to watch course recordings, and 22% identified an increase in their focus and comfort (based on the imbalance between the number of students who attended remotely and in-person, it is unlikely that much, if any, of this increase is due to in-person attendance). It's important to note that what the students identified as beneficial to their learning are the characteristics of remote synchronous courses.

Because so few students engaged in campus attendance in AA courses, AQC's concern regarding pedagogical inequities created by the division of students into two groups presumably did not

surface. Although the report from OAI includes important findings regarding AA as well as remote synchronous courses, the majority of concerns raised by the AQC remain unaddressed by OAA.

Unaddressed and Ongoing Concerns
Pedagogical Concerns:

- It is still 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?
- We are concerned about how AA prepares students for their future courses and professional responsibilities. Because AA students do not have to commit to the faculty with respect to attendance, the lack of structure inherent in "the option of choice" may have an adverse effect on their preparation for meeting professional expectations after graduation.
- How were high-impact practices (HIPS) incorporated into AA courses?
- Did issues arise from broadcasting (i.e., zooming) a course addressed? If so, how were they 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. Did AA courses impact a student's sense of place at PSU?

Concerns Regarding Faculty:
AQC continues to be concerned about the impact on instructors especially with regard to preparing and teaching an AA course that requires the creation and delivery of two, parallel courses. This creates a workload issue both in the amount and type of work. Similarly, having to run both modalities concurrently impacts the quality of instruction, particularly in AA courses without the benefit of an assistant providing tech support. This also brings up an issue of fairness as faculty members who teach AA courses must prepare for both in-person and online modalities whereas faculty who only teach in-person or online only prepare for one modality. In addition to the increased faculty workload, equity becomes an issue across departments regarding support for faculty teaching in under-resourced units.

Based on our instructional experience, AQC members maintain that the hyperflexibility explicit in the AA format undermines student commitment to the course; respect for the instructor's time; and impairs development of the dynamic necessary for relational learning.

Resource Concerns:
Another set of concerns regard the expense of the visible and invisible infrastructure required of AA courses. As the added workload of faculty undertaking AA courses comes at the expense of other demands on faculty time, the on-going investment in and maintenance of technology needed for AA courses use financial resources that the University can deploy for greater impact.

Without a testing center, AA courses make additional demands on the faculty. For example, supporting exams in a dual modality creates additional work for the faculty and it creates equitability issues for the students.

AQC strongly recommends that the Faculty Senate form an ad-hoc committee in AY 2023-2024 to address the above concerns and create policies regarding the offering of AA courses as it relates to the curriculum.