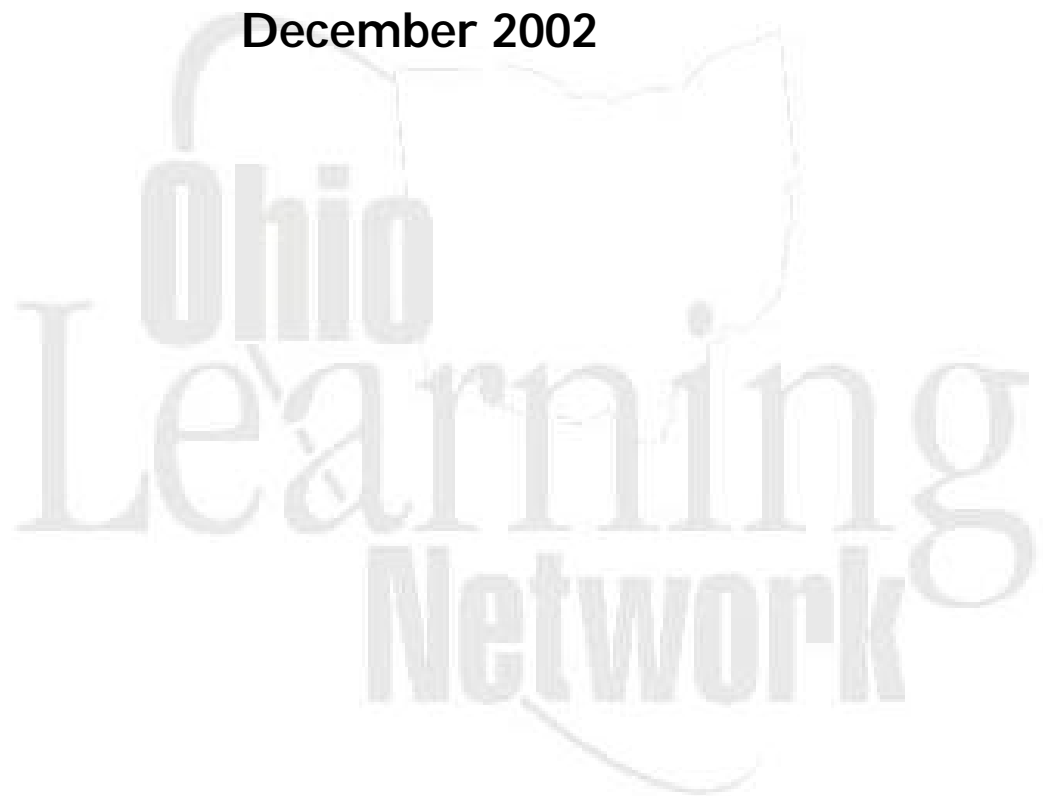


# Quality Learning in Ohio and at a Distance

A Report of the Ohio Learning Network Task Force on  
Quality in Distance Learning

December 2002



# About the Ohio Learning Network

The Ohio Learning Network (OLN) helps Ohioans find educational programs that meet their needs, works with colleges and universities using technology to improve teaching and learning, and helps build partnerships among higher education, schools, businesses, and communities. OLN is a consortium of Ohio's public and independent colleges and universities and is an initiative of the Ohio Board of Regents. On the World Wide Web:

**[www.oln.org](http://www.oln.org)**

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# **Ohio Learning Network Task Force on Quality in Distance Learning**

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## **OLN Staff**

**Kate Carey**, Executive Director

**Sheryl Hansen**, Director, Professional Development Programs

**George Steele**, Director, Degree Completion Programs

**Julie Clemens**, Graduate Administrative Associate

# Executive Summary

For nearly three hundred years, higher education has sought to continuously improve itself. Ohio opened its first university — Ohio University — following the passage of the Northwest Ordinance in 1787. Today, the state has a full complement of higher education in two- and four- year, public and independent institutions. The push for quality is as real today as it has ever been.

In the last decade, new and emerging methods for *delivering* educational content have evolved along with questions regarding the quality of that delivery. Consequently, Ohio policy has held quality learning as a goal for all higher education, regardless of the mode of delivery. The Ohio Learning Network (OLN), the State's e-learning consortium, convened a Task Force on Quality to explore issues of quality in e-learning. The Task Force met over a six month period, their work culminating in this report.

In this document, the Task Force makes carefully researched and compelling statements about e-learning. First, the Task Force is adamant that e-learning programs and courses, just like their traditional counterparts, need to be academically rigorous and deep and result in appropriate learning. Second, they concur that faculty and students must acknowledge that these new and emerging methods for delivering educational content bring new and different teaching and learning challenges. Last, e-learning requires substantial start-up costs. The Task Force set aside this cost discussion as the Ohio Board of Regents Educational Technology Credit Task Force is currently working on these issues.

The Task Force made the following recommendations to ensure Ohioans have access to quality learning. **They suggest the OLN Governing Board implement these recommendations in 2003-2004. The Task Force will reconvene in early summer 2003 to review implementation progress and to guide the OLN staff and e-learning community in further initiatives.**

**CHARGE 1:**  
Describe the essential conditions for quality e-learning to be created and to be offered for credit or noncredit by Ohio's colleges and universities.

## Charge 1:

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**Describe the essential conditions for quality e-learning to be created and to be offered for credit or noncredit by Ohio's colleges and universities.**

### Recommendation:

Ohio colleges and universities should use the policies and procedures that it has in place for the design, approval, assessment, and revision for all courses, whether they are taught face-to-face, blended, or at a distance. Institutions, faculty, and administration also should continue to revise these policies and procedures to reflect current best practices and tools, adapted to fit local needs and abilities. OLN should provide leadership and support in the development and dissemination of tools and models for such revisions.

## Charge 2:

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**Review the existing OLN Principles of Good Practice and recommend changes or additions to these principles.**

### **Recommendation:**

The Task Force submits the following revised OLN Principles of Good Practice for the adoption by the Governing Board and implementation by all OLN member institutions. The Task Force recommends that OLN staff work with each campus to ensure the principles are followed and that any courses created with OLN or OBR funds are measured against these Principles. Updated OLN Principles of Good Practice strengthen activities by Ohio administrators and faculty in the creation and delivery of e-learning. OLN should develop a method to “track” the courses that are meeting the OLN Principles of Good Practice, work with campuses to meet those Principles, and discontinue support/promotion of the courses not meeting the Principles.

## Charge 3:

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**Stimulate the creation of delivery methods for quality content by Ohio faculty.**

### **Recommendation:**

- OLN should implement the following funding programs and quality reviews during the next two years to create appropriate methodologies for Ohio faculty to create and deliver content. Assessment of these projects should be completed within one year of the project conclusion.
- Fund a Request for Proposals to create content in areas where content gaps exist and in areas that meets the needs of the citizenry of Ohio.
- Fund a Request for Proposals that supports new and emerging areas of delivery methods, including but not limited to learning objects, modules, and other digital modes.
- Establish a review panel of state and national experts that are capable of recognizing quality content and sponsor appropriate awards: recognition in the OhioLearns! catalog, certificates to faculty and design teams, etc.
- Create a “Best Practices” distinction by convening a review panel of state and national experts to establish criteria (using this committee’s definitions of quality), identify courses, modules, etc., and highlight them on the OLN Website, in OhioLearns!, and in other national collections.

**CHARGE 2:  
Review the existing  
OLN Principles of  
Good Practice and  
recommend changes  
or additions to these  
principles.**

**CHARGE 3:  
Stimulate the  
creation of delivery  
methods for quality  
content by Ohio  
faculty.**

**CHARGE 4:**  
Create a strategy for the professional development of faculty and information technology support staff focusing on learning processes associated with technology-enhanced learning and using the OLN Principles of Good Practice.

**CHARGE 5:**  
Investigate new models of technology-enhanced teaching and learning, including the possibilities of shared content, storage, and identification and usage of such content.

**Charge 4:**

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Create a strategy for the professional development of faculty and information technology support staff focusing on learning processes associated with technology-enhanced learning and using the OLN Principles of Good Practice.

**Recommendation:**

**Every Ohio college and university involved in e-learning should support the appropriate professional development education of faculty and staff (including administrators), which fits with the culture and nature of each campus.** When appropriate, OLN should assist in coordinating professional development opportunities across member campuses.

**Charge 5:**

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Investigate new models of technology-enhanced teaching and learning, including the possibilities of shared content, storage, and identification and usage of such content.

**Recommendation:**

Through OLN, Ohio's higher education institutions should continue thoughtful experimentation and assessment of new educational models that support innovative ways to deliver quality education.

OLN should serve as a conduit for identifying and supporting collaborative research opportunities between its member institutions and OhioLINK, Ohio Supercomputer Center and OARnet, institutions that each plays an integral role in knowledge management and delivery. In addition, distance learning courses listed in OhioLearns! that utilize new modes of teaching and learning should be assessed against the OLN Principles of Good Practice. Conversely, the OLN Principles of Good Practice should be periodically updated to take into consideration these new ways of delivering education at a distance.

## Charge 6:

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**Identify and disseminate information about quality learning and practices to home institutions and a broader global audience.**

### **Recommendation:**

Identify resources and implement actions.

- **OLN website** contains many reviewed resources for faculty. OLN should maintain a dynamic site by updating it regularly with teaching community assistance.
  - TECPD community meetings share faculty best practices in face-to-face and online environments. OLN should continue support and development of the TECPD group and incorporate learning from that group into the statewide teaching and learning community.
- **OLN Conference** annually brings Ohio's faculty together to learn from each other. The Conference should grow to involve the four higher education initiatives (OLN, OhioLINK, OARnet and OSC) and include programming to attract more faculty and graduate students. Learning perspectives and needs should be considered when inviting vendors to the conference.
- **OLN Quality Task Force report** should be shared throughout Ohio, including:
  - Soliciting the Chancellor of the Ohio Board of Regents support of this report and involving him in disseminating this report to a public forum.
  - Sponsoring sessions to present this report at the OLN and OCHEA Conferences in March 2003.
  - Encouraging Task Force members and others to submit papers about e-learning quality issues to national and regional conferences, including EDUCAUSE.
  - "Pushing" information to campus communities.
    - Host Campus meetings to discuss and inculcate the revised OLN Principles of Good Practice. An OLN Regional Coordinator and a campus representative would co-host a two-hour meeting of selected campus individuals representing the Provost's Office, Distance Learning, Faculty Development, Student Services and selected faculty innovators.
    - Suggest campus teaching and learning centers link directly to the report.
- Utilize Ohio SchoolNet, the State Department of Education and other K-16 entities as dissemination mechanisms for sharing the Quality Task Force recommendations with the K-16 community.

## CHARGE 6:

**Identify and disseminate information about quality learning and practices to home institutions and a broader global audience.**

# Quality Learning in Ohio and at a Distance

## Introduction

The impact of the changes in digital technology over the past fifteen years on teaching and learning are still being explored, debated, and assessed. Educators from around the world are continuing to try new and different models that take advantage of the ever-changing technologies and continue to maintain quality. The conditions under which particular models provide the most effective educational experience are often intensely debated by the academic community and policymakers. It is unclear which of the new models will survive during the next five years. Much like the railroads, telecommunications, and utilities at the turn of the century, the dot coms and other users of digital technology (including higher education) are in a period of experimentation and exploration.

The claims for the promise of the new technologies are extensive. Researchers described a new regime where digital technologies would revolutionize the structure of higher education.<sup>1</sup> This “new regime” would feature super-star faculty as content experts, other faculty as facilitators, and the unbundling and commoditization of the traditional university. While predictions like these abound, assessments of the early models of e-learning support “no significant difference,” “significant improvement,” and “significantly worse,” indicating that there is still considerable debate over what works and what does not in the online environment.<sup>2</sup> What do we know and how might we use this knowledge for guidance in assessing quality in online courses? Essentially, good teaching is good teaching. While face-to-face and e-learning courses confront unique challenges, both wrestle with quality issues that boil down to “What are principles of good teaching?”

While face-to-face and e-learning courses confront unique challenges, both wrestle with quality issues that boil down to “What are principles of good teaching?”

## Principles of Good Practice in Teaching

Chickering and Gamson (1987) developed the “Seven Principles of Good Practice,” based on four decades of raw data.<sup>3</sup> The following is a summary of these seven principles:

- Encourage contact between student and faculty
- Develop reciprocity and cooperation among students
- Use active learning techniques
- Give prompt feedback
- Emphasize time on task
- Communicate high expectations
- Respect diverse talents and ways of learning

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<sup>1</sup> Katz, R.N. & Associates (Eds.). (1999). *Dancing with the Devil: Information Technology and the New Competition in Higher Education*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

<sup>2</sup> Shearer, R. (2002, September 15). “No significant difference and distance education.” *Distance-educator.com*. Retrieved from <http://www.distance-educator.com/dnews>.

<sup>3</sup> Chickering, A. & Gamson, Z. (1987). “Seven Principles for Good Practice in Undergraduate Education.” *AAHE Bulletin at American Association of Higher Education*, March.

**As Ohio continues to push forward in e-learning, educators seek to better understand the criteria for course quality and to apply the criteria to the design, development, and delivery of content offered at a distance.**

In 1999, the Ohio Learning Network (OLN) drew on Chickering and Gamson's (1987) work and other carefully selected sources to draft their initial version of the OLN Principles of Good Practice for member institutions. These principles have guided content and student services development by OLN members over the last three years. Today, much more is known about creating online and blended content, about teaching and learning at a distance, and about essential services to support learners at a distance.

While significant growth and development in e-learning has been made since OLN was created, e-learning is still in its infancy. Much remains unknown about the effectiveness and quality of educational technologies, yet demands for quality are being heard from learners, employers, funding agencies, and policymakers. Consequently, Ohio policy has held quality learning as a goal for all higher education, regardless of mode of delivery.

As Ohio continues to push forward in e-learning, educators seek to better understand the criteria for course quality and to apply the criteria to the design, development, and delivery of content offered at a distance. The process should be similar to the assessment of quality in the face-to-face mode. To this end, OLN created a Task Force to examine these issues, to make recommendations to the OLN Governing Board, and to set the stage to implement and review any necessary changes.

The charge to the Task Force serves as a framework for this report.

## **Charge to the Task Force**

The Task Force comprised representation from across OLN member institutions. It included members of the OLN Professional Development committee and members from the OLN Academic Outreach committee. OLN staff also served as active and contributing members. The Task Force met almost every month, May through November 2002. Meetings were held at OhioLINK offices in Columbus, Ohio (see Appendix I).

The OLN Governing Board charged the OLN Task Force on Quality in Distance Learning with six tasks (see Appendix II). On June 6, 2002, OLN's Executive Director, Kate Carey, accepted a revised charge from the committee specifying that quality in distance learning should be discussed in respect to the delivery of e-learning, but not in relationship to program or course content. The rationale for this revision was that academic institutions already have in place assessment indicators and curriculum approval processes addressing the academic quality of their offerings.

The revised charge was as follows:

- Describe the essential conditions for quality e-learning to be created and to be offered for credit or noncredit by Ohio's colleges and universities.
- Review the existing OLN Principles of Good Practice (see Appendix III) and recommend changes or additions to these principles.
- Stimulate the creation of delivery methods for quality content by Ohio faculty.

- Create a strategy for the professional development of faculty and information technology support staff that focuses on learning processes associated with technology-enhanced learning and uses the OLN Principles of Good Practice.
- Investigate new models of technology-enhanced teaching and learning, including the possibilities of shared content, storage, and identification and usage of such content.
- Identify and disseminate information about quality learning and practices to home institutions and a broader global audience.

## Charge 1

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**Describe the essential conditions for quality e-learning to be created and to be offered for credit or non-credit by Ohio’s colleges and universities.**

The initial Task Force discussion on quality was guided by these questions:

- “What is the nature of quality learning?”
- “Is quality in learning different in a physical campus course than in a distance course?”
- “What are the barriers to quality e-learning?”
- “What are the outcomes of quality e-learning?”

By posing these questions, the Task Force sought to identify elements that would guide the state toward a better shared understanding of what quality e-learning means in Ohio.

### The Nature of Quality Learning

The Task Force determined that quality is defined in many ways in higher education, but the basic elements involve the interaction among and between faculty and students. This “relationship building” is a key component in quality learning.

Chickering and Gamson’s (1987) Principles of Good Practice remain valid for e-learning. E-learning is commonly understood to represent the full spectrum of technology-enhanced teaching and learning. The following analysis by Chickering and Ehrmann (1996) describes how technology can leverage implementation of these principles.

The Task Force also acknowledged that e-learning requires substantial start-up costs. The Task Force set aside this cost discussion as the Ohio Board of Regents Educational Technology Credit Task Force is currently working on these issues.

... the Task Force sought to identify elements that would guide the state toward a better shared understanding of what quality e-learning means in Ohio.

## Principles of Good Practice

## Role Technology Can Play<sup>4</sup>

Encourage contact between student and faculty	Computer-mediated communication provides faster, more open, and more reflective communication.
Develop reciprocity and cooperation among students	Computer-mediated communication facilitates group interactions, problem solving, and building communities.
Use active learning techniques	Technology-based simulations allow for greater interactivity and student manipulation, and primary resources in digital format enhance student scholarly research.
Give prompt feedback	Computer-mediated communication provides considerable avenues for prompt and reflective feedback.
Emphasize time on task	Technology provides new opportunities for creating new forms of mediated environments, which provide structure and engage the students.
Communicate high expectations	Computer-mediated environments offer instructors a variety of avenues for demonstrating and conveying high expectations. Furthermore, these environments can provide dramatic shifts in "audience" which can foster higher expectations from student work.
Respect diverse talents and ways of learning	Technology provides the means for instructors to build multiple pathways to learning within the same course by allowing content and discussion to be provided in multiple ways.

<sup>4</sup> Summarized from Chickering, A. & Ehrmann, S. (1996). "Implementing the Seven Principles: Technology as Lever." *The AAHE Bulletin at American Association of Higher Education*, October.

## **The Barriers to Quality E-learning**

Many of the traditional barriers to learning reported by Chickering and Gamson are also barriers to e-learning. Among these barriers are: individual attitudes and habits (e.g., inertia, fear and ignorance), time and money considerations, and learning styles. It is the consensus of the Task Force that all instructors, regardless of their choice of delivery methods, need to address these traditional barriers.

In addition to traditional barriers, e-learning also may involve barriers that relate directly to the use of technology. The Task Force identified several examples of technology barriers:

- Learners or faculty with little or no technical skill or access.
- Campus technology infrastructure that is antiquated, inadequate, or absent all together.
- Campus technology infrastructure that is inequitable with regard to user access or that is not ADA compliant.
- Campus culture that may discount the faculties' use of instructional technologies and innovative pedagogies, especially as it relates to promotion and tenure and other rewards.
- Campus culture that believes that the only true learning experience is a residential experience.
- Restrictive and antiquated policies at the state and campus levels.

## **The Outcomes of Quality E-Learning**

The committee is adamant that e-learning programs and courses, just like their traditional counterparts, are rigorous and deep and result in appropriate learning outcomes. Faculty, students, and institutional support systems share this responsibility. The following list delineates these responsibilities.

## Faculty, Student, and Institutional Roles and Responsibilities

Ohio colleges and universities should use the policies and procedures that they have in place for the design, approval, assessment, and revision for all courses, whether they are taught face-to-face, blended, or at a distance.

### Role of Faculty

- Knowledge of evolving pedagogical models in a new environment, specifically as these models introduce new considerations for copyright and trademark obligations and offer new techniques and tools for e-learning assessment.
- Awareness of the student learning/discovery process and how it applies to content.
- Awareness of the flexibility and the iterative process that technology adds to teaching.
- Recognition of student developmental processes within the process of content development.
- Inclusion of a feedback loop for assessment of learning outcomes.

### Role of Students

- Preparation for the use of technology and the responsibilities associated with online education. This includes technical expectations, readiness, learning, and career goals.

### Role of the Institution

- Institutional commitment of support for faculty in effectively blending content, instructional design, and technology.
- Encouragement and support for faculty to be proactive and/or reactive in addressing students' needs as they fulfill their learning outcomes.
- Clear delineation and availability of services for remote students.
- Institutional commitment of time, effort, and funding for e-learning.

### RECOMMENDATION:

Ohio colleges and universities should use the policies and procedures that they have in place for the design, approval, assessment, and revision for all courses, whether they are taught face-to-face, blended, or at a distance. Institutions, faculty, and administration also should continue to revise these policies and procedures to reflect current best practices and tools, adapted to fit local needs and abilities. OLN should provide leadership and support in the development and dissemination of tools and models for such revisions.

## Charge 2

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### Review the existing OLN Principles of Good Practice and recommend changes or additions to these principles.

The Task Force deliberated at length to revise the initial Principles of Good Practice developed in 1999 (see Appendix IV). This updated version strengthens the commitments to e-learning and services and requires compliancy for OLN funded content. It takes the lessons learned in the last three years and builds on current activities to provide updated guidelines for institutions to strengthen and enhance their e-learning offerings.

### OLN Principles of Good Practice – December 2002

The OLN Principles of Good Practice, the cornerstone of this electronic access to Ohio higher education, were developed to guide institutions in content creation and delivery and to assure students that content in the *Ohio Learns!* catalog meets their education and professional needs. The Principles draw upon the work of other organizations, such as the North Central Accrediting Association, the Southwestern Ohio Council for Higher Education, the Western Cooperative for Educational Telecommunications, and the Southern Regional Educational Board. All courses and programs to be listed in the online course catalog have been reviewed against the OLN Principles of Good Practice by the offering institutions.

### Institutional Responsibilities

1. The institution offering e-learning programs or courses must be accredited by a nationally recognized accrediting body and authorized to operate in the state where the program or course originates.
2. The institution's e-learning programs and courses also must meet the appropriate accreditation standards and criteria.
3. The institution offering the e-learning program or course is responsible for maintaining quality when collaborating within a consortium.
4. These principles are applicable to all e-learning programs and courses, which includes degree or certificate programs and credit or non-credit courses.
5. The institution offering the e-learning program or course is responsible for reviewing educational programs and providing and ensuring continued compliance with the OLN Principles of Good Practice.
6. The institution will ensure that the student registered in and authenticated to take a course is the student actually completing the work.
7. The institution will follow the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act.
8. The institution will provide systems to comply with Section 508 of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

**8. The institution will provide systems to comply with Section 508 of the Americans with Disabilities Act.**

9. The institution will provide faculty and staff development to support instructional and technological strategies.
10. The institution will allow students the opportunity to complete a degree or certificate program, once started, if the e-learning program is terminated or phased out.
11. The institution shall disseminate advertising, recruiting, and admissions materials and resources clearly and accurately representing the program and the services available.

## **Instructional Responsibilities:**

### **Instruction and Courses**

1. Academic review, approval, oversight and student outcomes are consistent across the institution's academic offerings, i.e. learning outcomes meet or exceed established instructional curricular standards.
2. E-learning programs and courses of study are rigorous and deep and result in appropriate learning outcomes.
3. E-learning programs are coherent and complete.
4. E-learning provides for appropriate interaction between faculty and students and among students. Qualified faculty provide appropriate facilitation and assessment of e-learning opportunities.
5. Instructors comply with institutional practices for course authentication to ensure student coursework is completed by the student enrolled.
6. Faculty, graduate students, and staff avail themselves of institutional resources about instructional strategies, pedagogies, and teaching innovations, especially related to e-learning.
7. E-learning faculty and instructors work with instructional designers and utilize other campus resources and ensure their e-learning offerings meet or exceed Section 508 of the Americans with Disabilities Act standards and are accessible to all learners.
8. A team approach to developing, facilitating and assessing e-learning offerings is utilized. Team members include experts in subject and content matter, assessment, instructional design and development, software/hardware and help desk personnel, as well as students.
9. Faculty, graduate students, and staff follow institutional intellectual property and copyright policies and abide by all related federal laws.

**6. Faculty, graduate students, and staff avail themselves of institutional resources about instructional strategies, pedagogies, and teaching innovations, especially related to e-learning.**

## Instructional Responsibilities:

### Student Support

1. The program or course provides students with clear, complete, and timely information on the curriculum, course and degree requirements, nature of faculty/student interaction, prerequisite technology competencies and skills, technical equipment requirements, availability of academic support services, library resources, financial aid resources, costs and payment policies, and rights to accommodation based on special needs as defined in the institution's student handbook.
2. Enrolled students have reasonable and adequate access to the range of student services and resources appropriate to support their learning as defined in the institution's student handbook.
3. Institutions must provide students with information, assistance, and assessment of student capability in the following areas:
  - Students must have access to information about the curriculum, the course and degree program, and the baseline technology needed for success.
  - Students must have access to assistance with academics, career, admissions, financial aid, and technology.
  - Students must have access to academic assessment in the form of placement testing and clearly stated prerequisites, and students must have access to technical assessment to determine if students are prepared to engage in e-learning.

**1. E-learning courses or programs should offer equivalent academic standards and resources as compared to courses or programs offered through traditional delivery methods.**

### Assessment Practices

1. E-learning courses or programs should offer equivalent academic standards and resources as compared to courses or programs offered through traditional delivery methods.
2. The institution or consortium agrees to evaluate annually the outcomes of the offerings in *Ohio Learns!* Data collected should be used for continuous improvement in courses, degrees and certificates.
3. The institution or consortium agrees to evaluate the effectiveness of the e-learning programs and courses, including annual assessment of student learning, student recruitment and retention, and student and faculty satisfaction.
4. Upon completion of the course, certificate, or program, an assessment and documentation of student achievement should be completed.
5. Interaction and mediation between faculty and student and among students is required.
6. Student services, including advisement and information about admissions, registration, scheduling and financial aid, should be an element of the annual assessment.

Current and emerging methodologies still need a period of experimentation, implementation, and assessment.

## RECOMMENDATION:

The Task Force submits the above revised OLN Principles of Good Practice for the adoption by the Governing Board and implementation by all OLN member institutions. The Task Force recommends that OLN staff work with each campus to ensure the principles are followed and that any courses created with OLN or OBR funds are measured against these Principles.

Updated OLN Principles of Good Practice strengthen activities by Ohio administrators and faculty in the creation and delivery of e-learning. OLN should develop a method to “track” the courses that are meeting the OLN Principles of Good Practice, work with campuses to meet those Principles, and discontinue support/promotion of the courses not meeting the Principles.

### Charge 3

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#### Stimulate the creation of delivery methods for quality content by Ohio faculty.

Current and emerging methodologies still need a period of experimentation, implementation, and assessment. The OLN website will continue to be a clearinghouse for information about methodologies and the annual conference will continue to highlight the most promising ones.

## RECOMMENDATION:

OLN should implement the following funding programs and quality reviews during the next two years to create appropriate methodologies for Ohio faculty to create and deliver content. Assessment of these projects should be completed within one year of the project conclusion.

- Fund a Request for Proposals to create content in areas where content gaps exist and in areas that meets the needs of the citizenry of Ohio.
- Fund a Request for Proposals that supports new and emerging areas of delivery methods, including but not limited to learning objects, modules, and other digital modes.
- Establish a review panel of state and national experts that are capable of recognizing quality content and sponsor appropriate awards: recognition in the *Ohio Learns!* catalog, certificates to faculty and design teams, etc.
- Create a “Best Practices” distinction by convening a review panel of state and national experts to establish criteria (using this committee’s definitions of quality), identify courses, modules, etc., and highlight them on the OLN Website, in *Ohio Learns!*, and in other national collections.

## Charge 4

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### Create a strategy for the professional development of faculty and information technology support staff focusing on learning processes associated with technology-enhanced learning and using the OLN Principles of Good Practice.

Supporting campus-professional development programs around the OLN Principles of Good Practice can guide faculty and IT staff into a better shared understanding of what is needed to create and develop quality technology-enhanced learning. Many campuses currently support some level of faculty development. OLN faculty development support programs ([www.oln.org](http://www.oln.org)) such as the Learning Communities, TECPD, and course management listserves also offer consulting services. Ideally, a unit will contain competent, experienced individuals who have an appreciation for and skills in the development and delivery of online interaction between faculty and students. In short, the faculty and the information technology support staff must be dedicated to the principles of active learning, time on task, collaborative learning, and student-to-student and student-to-faculty communications.

A campus professional development program should provide effective and timely training related to new technology initiatives for faculty and IT staff. IT staff should receive training in hardware and software support of technology-enhanced learning. Institutions also should offer professional development activity that focuses on curriculum design, multimedia applications, instructional development and implementation, as well as administrative assistance for distributed learning endeavors.

Balance must exist between the need for content and the need for technology. Technology must permeate the curriculum and not be considered as an “add on” or used exclusively for distance learning. Professional development as a community building exercise can satisfy these needs and instill skills and confidence into individuals who develop and implement technology-enhanced learning. This involves skill building and socialization to create a new culture in which technology is linked inextricably with teaching and learning.

### RECOMMENDATION:

Every Ohio college and university involved in e-learning should support the appropriate professional development education of faculty and staff (including administrators), which fits with the culture and nature of each campus. When appropriate, OLN should assist in coordinating professional development opportunities across member campuses.

Technology must permeate the curriculum and not be considered as an “add on” or used exclusively for distance learning.

## Charge 5

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**Investigate new models of technology-enhanced teaching and learning, including the possibilities of shared content, storage, and identification and usage of such content.**

The Task Force reiterated a need for continual experimentation and assessment of new educational models that support new and innovative ways to deliver quality education. This work should be sponsored by OLN and supported collaboratively across campuses and within each, separate member institution. Many of OLN's member institutions have indicated an interest in and have moved forward on studying two of these models in particular— that of computer mediated communication (CMC) and institutional knowledge management.

**Because of changes in technology, instructors have considerable latitude to construct new mediated learning environments that blend elements of CMC, distance and face-to-face learning.**

### **Computer Mediated Communication (CMC)**

Researchers have noted that all models of learning in higher education, traditional or technology-enhanced, should revolve around the mediated learning environment constructed for the student. Computer Mediated Communication (CMC) provides a new and separate domain from either the traditional classroom or distance education, with its own unique advantages. Because of changes in technology, instructors have considerable latitude to construct new mediated learning environments that blend elements of CMC, distance and face-to-face learning. The past five to eight years has seen a tremendous explosion of new blends that provide new and innovative opportunities to use mediated learning environments and evaluate their quality and overall affect on the educational process.

### **Institutional Knowledge Management**

Knowledge management, specifically as it relates to the teaching and learning enterprise, will be a monumental issue for any size academic institution. This can be attributed to numerous advancements in information technology that affords higher education a medium to more easily explore, store, preserve, use, and share digital assets housed in data warehouses, digital libraries and institutional knowledge repositories. The low cost of reproducing and distributing rich media and other digital content encourages faculty to share educational resources and segment course content into standalone learning objects. In addition to advancing teaching, learning and research, a successful institutional repository system has the potential to increase an institution's visibility and help fulfill its service and/or outreach mission. Several international and national initiatives are already underway including the Open Knowledge Initiative, Ohio State University's Knowledge Bank, MIT's Dspace, the NSF Digital Library project, and MERLOT.

## RECOMMENDATION:

Through OLN, Ohio's higher education institutions should continue thoughtful experimentation and assessment of new educational models that support innovative ways to deliver quality education.

OLN should serve as a conduit for identifying and supporting collaborative research opportunities between its member institutions and OhioLINK, Ohio Super Computing Center and OARnet, institutions that each play an integral role in knowledge management and delivery. In addition, distance learning courses listed in OhioLearns! that utilize new modes of teaching and learning should be assessed against the OLN Principles of Good Practice. Conversely, the OLN Principles of Good Practice should be periodically updated to take into consideration these new ways of delivering education at a distance.

## Charge 6

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### Identify and disseminate information about quality learning and practices to home institutions and a broader global audience.

Faculty across Ohio continually seek resources to help them use technology creatively in course delivery. Through its website, OLN provides opportunities for faculty to increase their knowledge through involvement in communities of practice, interactive lists, and through links to online resources. Information changes rapidly, making its value only as good as its accuracy and timeliness. OLN must continue to store and link to resources on its website that represent the cutting edge of teaching and learning. OLN communities' members should help the staff shoulder the responsibility of checking the accuracy and assessing the quality of these resources by serving as external reviewers. As Ohio's leading e-learning advocate, OLN remains committed to disseminating information to the broadest community possible, including the general public.

## RECOMMENDATION:

Identify resources and implement actions.

- OLN website contains many reviewed resources for faculty. OLN should maintain a dynamic site by updating it regularly with teaching community assistance.
  - TECPD community meetings share faculty best practices in face-to-face and online environments. OLN should continue support and development of the TECPD group and incorporate learning from that group into the statewide teaching and learning community.

(Continued)

## RECOMMENDATION (Cont.):

- OLN Conference annually brings Ohio's faculty together to learn from each other. The Conference should grow to involve the four higher education initiatives (OLN, OhioLINK, OARnet and OSC) and include programming to attract more faculty and graduate students. Learning perspectives and needs should be considered when inviting vendors to the conference.
- OLN Quality Task Force report should be shared throughout Ohio, including:
  - Soliciting the Chancellor of the Ohio Board of Regents support of this report and involving him in disseminating this report to a public forum.
  - Sponsoring sessions to present this report at the OLN and OCHEA Conferences in March 2003.
  - Encouraging Task Force members and others to submit papers about e-learning quality issues to national and regional conferences including EDUCAUSE.
  - "Pushing" information to campus communities.
    - Host Campus meetings to discuss and inculcate the revised OLN Principles of Good Practice. An OLN Regional Coordinator and a campus representative would co-host a two-hour meeting of selected campus individuals representing the Provost's Office, Distance Learning, Faculty Development, Student Services and selected faculty innovators.
    - Suggest campus teaching and learning centers link directly to the report.
- Utilize Ohio SchoolNet, the State Department of Education and other K-16 entities as dissemination mechanisms for sharing the Quality Task Force recommendations with the K-16 community.

# **APPENDICES**

- I. Task Force Deliberation Process/Methodology  
& Meeting Schedule**
- II. Original Charge to the Task Force**
- III. Principles of Good Practice – October 1999**

# APPENDIX I

## Task Force Deliberation Process/Methodology

The Task Force used meeting times to discuss the various components of the charge and to draft responses. They also shared relevant resources with each other at these meetings, in addition to using their listserv. During meetings they worked both in large and small groups. Between meetings the chair sent out the resulting drafts for comments and revisions. The final report was researched and drafted by small groups assigned to specific sections. This work was completed via E-mail. OLN staff compiled these documents into a final report. In October, the Academic Outreach and Professional Development committees vetted this report. The final report was presented to the OLN Governing Board in December 2002.

## Meeting Schedule

### May 1, 2002: 12:00 PM - 2:30 PM

- Introductions
- Discuss charge

### June 20, 2002: 10:00 AM - 2:00 PM

- Adopt the charge as redefined (Metros presented report with recommendations for revised charge to Board on May 21).
- Describe the essential conditions for quality learning to be created and to be offered for credit or noncredit by Ohio's colleges and universities.
- How does quality in distance/technology-enhanced learning differ from quality in physical, campus-based learning?
- What are the barriers and outcomes of distance learning?

### July 17, 2002: 11:00 AM - 3:00 PM

- Review the existing OLN Principles of Good Practice and recommend changes or additions to these principles.

### August 22, 2002: 10:00 AM - 2:00 PM

- Create a strategy to stimulate the creation of quality methodologies for delivering content for and by Ohio faculty.
- Create a strategy for faculty and information technology support staff professional development necessary to focus on the learning processes associated with technology-enhanced learning.

### October 28, 2002: 11:00 AM - 3:00 PM

- Quality Summit: Meet with OLN committees' for Academic Outreach and Professional Development to present and discuss draft report.

### December 17, 2002:

- Present final report to OLN Governing Board.

# APPENDIX II

## Original Charge to the Task Force

**The OLN Task Force on Quality in Distance Learning is charged with:**

- Describing the essential conditions for quality learning (content) to be created and to be offered for credit or noncredit by Ohio's colleges and universities
- Review the existing OLN Principles of Good Practice and recommend changes or additions to these principles
- Creating a strategy to stimulate the creation of quality content including learning objects for and by Ohio faculty
- Creating a strategy for the faculty professional development necessary to focus on learning process of technology-enhanced learning
- Investigating the possibilities of shared content, storage, and usage of such content
- Identify and disseminate information about quality content and practices

# APPENDIX III

## Principles of Good Practice - October, 1999

The Principles of Good Practice, the cornerstone of this electronic access to Ohio higher education, were developed to assure students about the quality of courses and programs at the on-line course catalog. The Principles draw upon the work of other organizations, such as the North Central Accrediting Association, the Southwestern Ohio Council for Higher Education, the Western Cooperative for Educational Telecommunications, and the Southern Regional Educational Board. All courses and programs to be listed in the on-line course catalog have been reviewed against the Principles of Good Practice by the offering colleges or universities.

### Basic Assumptions

Several assumptions are central to these principles:

1. The program or course offered at a distance is provided by or through an institution that is accredited by a nationally recognized accrediting body and authorized to operate in the state where the program or course originates.
2. The institution's programs and courses holding specialized accreditation meet the same requirements when offered at a distance.
3. The institution may be a single institution or a consortium of institutions.
4. These principles are generally applicable to all courses and programs-degree or certificate programs and to credit or non-credit courses.
5. It is the institution's responsibility to review educational programs and courses it provides at a distance and ensure continued compliance with these principles.
6. Institutions offering programs or for-credit courses are responsible for satisfying all in-state approval and accreditation requirements before students are enrolled.

### Instruction and Courses

1. Each program or course of study results in learning appropriate to the rigor and breadth of the degree or certificate awarded.
2. A degree or certificate program or course offered at a distance is coherent and complete.
3. The course provides for appropriate interaction between faculty and students and among students.
4. Qualified faculty provide appropriate supervision of the program or course that is offered at a distance.
5. Academic standards for all programs or courses offered at a distance are the same as those for courses delivered at the institution where the programs originate.
6. Student outcomes in programs or courses delivered at a distance should be the same in quality as student outcomes in the same programs or courses offered at the campus where they originate.
7. Institutions will take whatever steps necessary to ensure that the student registered in a

course is the student actually completing the work. As appropriate, verification will include proctored examinations with careful checking of identification. OLN member institutions will cooperate in these and other efforts essential to maintaining the integrity of degree programs.

### **Student Services**

1. The program or course provides students with clear, complete, and timely information on the curriculum, course and degree requirements, nature of faculty/student interaction, prerequisite technology competencies and skills, technical equipment requirements, availability of academic support services, financial aid resources, and costs and payment policies.
2. Enrolled students have reasonable and adequate access to the range of student services and resources appropriate to support their learning. Among the resources available are advising services, admissions, registration and scheduling, and information about student financial aid.
3. The institution has admission/acceptance criteria in place to assess whether the student has the background, knowledge, and technical skills required for undertaking the course/program.
4. Advertising, recruiting, and admissions materials clearly and accurately represent the program and the services available.

### **Commitment to Support**

The home institution demonstrates a commitment to ongoing support, both financial and technical, and where possible to continuation of the program or course for a period sufficient for students to complete a degree or certificate.

### **Evaluation and Assessment**

The institution agrees to evaluate annually the outcomes of its distance learning offerings. Criteria for evaluation include the following:

1. Program and course effectiveness, including annual assessments of student learning, student recruitment and retention, and student and faculty satisfaction.
2. Assessment and documentation of student achievement in each course at the completion of the program or course.
3. Accuracy of program or course announcements and electronic catalog entries.
4. Reasonable levels of resources available to students.
5. Equivalent academic standards of distance courses or programs, as compared to those same classes offered through traditional delivery methods.
6. Appropriate interaction between faculty and students and among students. reasonable levels of student services, including advisement, admission, registration and scheduling and information regarding financial aid.

