

**To: UNCW Faculty Senate**  
**From: Nathaniel Grove, Chair, Academic Standards Committee**  
**Date: November 1, 2012**  
**Re: Committee Report from Academic Standards**

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On Monday, October 22, 2012, the Academic Standards Committee met to discuss UNCW's plans regarding Academic Partnerships and the possible impacts that these plans could have on the academic standards of the programs involved in the one-year pilot. There was general consensus that the documents and briefing as provided were helpful in clarifying many of the issues involved, and we found the guarantees that faculty will maintain ultimate control over admission standards, course designs, and curricular models satisfactory. During our discussions and deliberations, the following concerns were expressed by members of the committee:

1. Significant expansion of the RN/BS undergraduate program - or any undergraduate program for that matter - could impact enrollment and demand for courses required of University Studies. Further, the expansion of such programs would likely necessitate the creation of additional, online-specific versions of a wide range of pre-existing University Studies courses, and obviously, qualified staff to teach these new courses. As such, it will be more important than ever to ensure that those departments that bear large responsibility for teaching University Studies courses be provided the resources needed to do so successfully. This will only be an issue for undergraduate programs participating in the Academic Partnerships program and would not impact any graduate programs.
2. By accelerating course offerings from the normal 15-week semester to a more condensed 7.5 weeks, faculty workloads could greatly increase, and we believe participating departments must provide adequate support for grading, preparation, etc. to safeguard instructional quality. In addition, we believe it important for participating departments to limit the number of credits students attempt in any 7.5-week period to prevent student overload and possible problems with SACS accreditation.
3. Although the departments that will participate in the one-year pilot do not anticipate contracting Instructional Connections, the committee would like to sound a note of caution about how the potential, future use of this, or similar, companies could impact UNCW's mission. Given that individual departments will still be responsible for examining the credentials of candidates from Instructional Connections and retain final hiring authority, this is not necessarily an academic standards issue at this time; however, the fact that these faculty may be hired at a wage far below current adjunct salary is certainly a cause for concern and perhaps an issue to be considered by Faculty Welfare.

Despite these issues, there was overall agreement that these concerns should not prevent UNCW from continuing its plans to contract Academic Partnerships on a trial basis to assist in the expansion of interested online programs. As a committee, however, we also unanimously agree that this support is conditional upon

departments carefully evaluating how the academic quality of their programs is impacted by these expansions and with sharing any internal (or external as may be the case with programs that require outside certification) reports of quality with the committee. We recommend that Academic Standards be briefed periodically throughout the one-year pilot and most certainly prior to any extension of the current one-year contract.

Respectfully submitted,

Nathaniel Grove (on behalf of the Academic Standards Committee)