

Background

Online teaching evolved gradually at SRJC, until 2020, when students and faculty alike were thrown in headlong, regardless of our levels of preparation. Given the available resources and the time restraints, faculty did an admirable job adapting. Now, as we enter an era where more than half of SRJC students are enrolled in online courses and more than half of SRJC courses offered are online, it is imperative to support outstanding instruction for our students by ensuring that faculty have the necessary resources, information, and training to succeed in an online environment.

The following considerations were key in informing our discussions:

- Online education has expanded significantly, requiring faculty to be proficient in andragogy, technology, and accessibility;
- Regular and Substantive Interaction (RSI) requirements must align with federal, state, and accreditation standards; and
- A well-structured certification process supports student success, equity, and instructional quality.
- The CVC-OEI Course Design Rubric hosted by the Online Network of Educators (@ONE) is considered the gold standard in compliance with state and federal regulations in addition to disciplinary best practices.

Focus and Scope

The Online Teaching Certification Workgroup was charged with developing recommendations for policies and procedures related to faculty online teaching certification at SRJC, while ensuring those recommendations align with best practices, accreditation requirements, and faculty needs.

We believe that the following recommendations accomplish that goal, and represent a path forward to support faculty with online instruction in accordance with SRJC's **mission** to "offer exceptional teaching," our **vision** to "equitable, impactful, transformative, enriching, and holistic learning opportunities that inspire our students to thrive," and our **value** of "Teaching and Learning that encompass excellence, freedom, and responsibility in academics that promote civic engagement, a love of learning, and success for all students." (<https://strategic-planning.santarosa.edu/district-mission-vision-and-values>)

Recommendations

Each recommendation is numbered separately by section to assist in senate discussion.

1. Certificate Basics

The Distance Education department at SRJC has long supported faculty in their online instructional journey, most recently with the Online Special Expertise (OSE) Certification program. Research into existing certification programs showed a variety of long, intense programs (often 80-120 hours) in existence going much more in depth on each topic than most instructors required. By adapting the existing OSE certification, we can address the evolving needs of our faculty and community. This approach allows us to leverage the Distance Education department's experience and knowledge of faculty needs, while saving time, money, and avoiding redundancy, ultimately ensuring a program tailored to the specific needs of both our faculty and students.

It has been shown that certification matters, since courses that undergo structured faculty training and peer review show increased student engagement and completion rates. Faculty certification ensures online courses meet best practices in structure, accessibility, and equity-focused instruction, as well as ensuring compliance with California Code of Regulations guidelines outlining Regular and Substantive Interaction (RSI) and accessibility requirements. Students also benefit when faculty apply standardized course design practices, making courses easier to navigate and reducing learning barriers.

1.1 Therefore, **WE RECOMMEND** that SRJC's Distance Education department create a custom Online Instruction Certification (OIC) that aligns with @ONE CVC-OEI Course Design Rubric¹ in legally relevant materials such as Interaction, and Accessibility, while also providing training in content presentation and assessment.

1.2 **WE RECOMMEND** that SRJC's OIC should be at least 40 hours (which is the current length of the existing Online Special Expertise (OSE) Certification program) to achieve @ONE alignment in legally relevant materials, such as Interaction and Accessibility.

1.3 **WE RECOMMEND** that when a department does not have any available certified faculty, the department chair, in consultation with the ID, can assign an online course to a non-certified faculty or new hire, who must then enroll in the full certificate course.

1.4 **WE RECOMMEND** that the certificate should be approved for FLEX and PGI.

1.5 While matters of pay are out of our purview, **WE RECOMMEND** working with AFA as appropriate to achieve a similar or monetary incentive for all faculty, especially those who do not qualify for FLEX or PGI, such as online associate faculty.

¹ (<https://onlinenetworkofeducators.org/course-design-academy/online-course-rubric/>)

2. Certificate Updates

2.1 WE RECOMMEND that Distance Education track faculty certification status, new regulations, and any recommended @ONE aligned updates, and will report any relevant information to the Academic Senate and DCC/IM on a regular basis, such as once a year. Any changes that could affect the time commitment of the SRJC certificate will be communicated to the Academic Senate as soon as possible².

3. Equivalency and Recertification

3.1 WE RECOMMEND that the following are granted automatic equivalency:

1. All @ONE's Certificate in OTD (Online Teaching & Design) pathways and POOR certifications **within the past 3 years**
2. All SRJC OSE certificates in **Canvas within the past 3 years**

3.2 WE RECOMMEND that, for certificates that fall outside of recommendation 3.1, an **abridged recertification** course will be created by DE.

1. The primary purpose of abridged recertification is to address instructor responsibilities in Accessibility and Interaction.
2. This course is recommended to be 3-5 hours. However, if DE determines a need, up to 10 hours is justified.
3. We recommend AFA consider negotiating with the District for monetary compensation for this course as well.

3.3 WE RECOMMEND the following for **abridged recertification**:

1. Any SRJC OSE certificates older than 3 years will complete the abridged recertification.
2. All certificates from other higher education institutions within the last 3 years will complete the abridged recertification.
3. Any outside certificates older than 3 years can be reviewed for equivalency by presenting the certification outline to the department chair and the Instructional Designer (ID), who will determine if it qualifies for abridged recertification. Otherwise, the faculty member must complete the full OIC certificate.
 - a. For example, if someone took @ONE's 120 hour certification, but it is 4 years old, they could get approval for abridged recertification.
 - b. However, if someone completed a 5-hour training from their previous college, that would likely not qualify for abridged recertification.
4. Abridged recertification must be completed within 1 year of the announcement of implementation of the certification program.
5. Those that do not complete abridged recertification within 1 year will be required to complete the full certificate to be approved for online courses.
 - a. This can be extended for an additional 6 months by the faculty member contacting their department chair, supervising administrator, and the Instructional Designer

² It is also worth noting the @ONE OEI Rubric will be updated in the future and will likely have an additional component to address Equity and Inclusion, which could be addressed at that time.

with their reasoning. (i.e. If a faculty member was on sabbatical or had an extenuating circumstance.)

4. Maintenance Requirements

4.1 WE RECOMMEND that, to maintain the Online Instruction Certification, once the initial certificate, equivalency, or recertification has been granted, instructors must complete at least **three hours** of online teaching professional development **every three years**.

1. The Distance Education department will keep track of certification maintenance status and contact instructors and their supervising administrator the semester prior to their certification expiring.

4.2 WE RECOMMEND that Distance Education keep a list of approved options, such as @ONE courses, SRJC DE-created options, and a process for requesting approval by the Instructional Designer)

4.3 WE RECOMMEND that the three hours of approved online teaching professional development once every three years should qualify for FLEX and PGI.

4.4 While matters of pay are out of our purview, **WE RECOMMEND** working with AFA as appropriate to achieve a similar or monetary incentive for all faculty, especially those who do not qualify for FLEX or PGI, such as online associate faculty.

5. Other Recommendations

5.1 WE RECOMMEND that the Academic Senate create a workgroup to update SRJC evaluation process for online courses in light of the new Online Instruction Certification requirements.

5.2 WE RECOMMEND that the Academic Senate pursue becoming a certified POCR campus³ by following up on SRJC's pilot POCR process, approved Spring 2024.

1. Peer Online Course Review (POCR) was established in 2014 by the CVC-OEI Professional Development Workgroup to ensure that students in the California Community College system have access to high-quality online courses designed to support student learning and success.

Workgroup members:

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³ <https://onlinenetworkofeducators.org/course-design-academy/pocr-resources/>