



VILLANOVA UNIVERSITY

FACULTY CONGRESS

ACADEMIC YEAR 2012-2013

Summaries of Feedback from the Online Form Related to the Proposed Online B.A.

<http://www1.villanova.edu/villanova/facultycongress/feedback/onlineba.html>

link active 20 March - 3 April 2013

Alumni/ae Comments

Education should become increasingly more inclusive and collaborative; it is the way of the future, with appropriate measures required for accountability. However the degree clearly is different than the residential BA: the technology offered at Villanova is NOT cutting edge; the proposed— orphaned—BA degree offers an easy out for those who do not want to put in the effort required by Villanova and ultimately will lower the image and standards of this institution. The unwillingness of the current administration to engage with faculty to listen with systemic attention is directly linked to the flawed results that have everybody upset.

Faculty Comments

A majority of faculty express deep reservations about the wisdom of pursuing an online B.A. program, as currently proposed. Their concerns fall into three general categories. First, the academic integrity of online courses and how this integrity can be guaranteed. Second, the undermining of Villanova's academic reputation with programs that are *perceived* to lack integrity, whether they actually do or not. Third, the non-inclusive process by which university decision makers developed this proposal. There were also faculty concerns about intellectual property rights, adequate resources, and falsely advertising a degree that would have no tangible payoff for enrollees. The faculty members whose comments were not unfavorable to the proposed degree nevertheless suggested that such a program must be developed very carefully so as to avoid potential pitfalls.

Staff Comments

The administration neglected to engage faculty and students in the decision-making process: not out of ignorance but as a matter of institutional priority. This was a very bad decision built on equally bad process. Rather than continuing to offer a “lesser but somehow still equal” degree, the university should investigate how to make its current residential degree more accessible. The proposed online degree program would reduce Villanova to a second-rate school, reduce alumni giving, and render worthless the residential degree.

Wayne Bremser, Mary Ann Cantrell, Lillian Cassel, Sohail Chaudhry, Linda Copel, Joseph Dellapenna, Mark Doorley, Rick Eckstein, Edwin Goff, Judith Hadley, Paul Hanouna, Eric Karson, Sandra Kearney, Christopher Kilby, Julie Klein, Edward Kresch, Kenneth Kroos, Sarvesh Kulkarni, Chad Leahy, Michael Levitan, Maryanne Lieb, Wenhong Luo, Susan Mackey-Kallis, Victoria McWilliams (Chair, on leave), Barbara Ott, Paul Pasles, Salvatore Poeta, Paul Reagan, Bernard Reilly, Louise Russo, Sridhar Santhanam, Donna Shai, Nancy Sharts-Hopko, Gay Strickler, Robert Styer, Mark Sullivan, Fayette Veverka, Catherine Warrick, Thomas Way, Kelly Welch (Vice Chair *pro tem*), Seth Whidden (Chair *pro tem*), Joyce Willens

Parents' Comments

Parents have significant concerns about reducing the value of the residential degree if this online degree remains a B.A. with a less rigorous core curriculum and with no distinction between online and residential education. The perception of Villanova will be devalued and end up little better than the University of Phoenix or Devry. Online adult education is important and adds value to Villanova, but the university must retain a distinction between an adult online degree and a residential Bachelor's. Families with many alumni will refuse to give money to the university if there is not a clear distinction between these two degrees. A lack of open, honest, and deliberative process is precisely what is wrong with Villanova.

Students' Comments (first half of responses)

Students are overwhelmingly upset about what they perceive to be the diminishing significance of their eventual Villanova degrees if students in an online bachelors degree program, entering with different admissions criteria, will not encounter the exact same expectations, opportunities, and financial costs involved in earning a traditional bachelors degree. They believe a diluted curriculum taught predominantly by part-time professors who did not create the courses will cheapen the Villanova brand and produce online courses that are much easier—and less rewarding—than those experienced within the Villanova community. These concerns make them less inclined to donate to the University.

Students' Comments (second half of responses)

Current students are concerned about the devaluing impact on their degree coming from an institution that confers the identical degree for an online program with different (perceived lower) standards than the regular full-time program. The impact on the reputation of the institution as being less rigorous would affect willingness to contribute to the university in the future. Students also question how a fully distance learning degree would contribute to the core mission of Unitas. These Villanovans would be isolated from the on-campus students, interactions are all via an electronic interface, and therefore provides no chance for community-building which is so often touted as the “essential” identity of Villanova University. There is interest to provide opportunities for the non-traditional students to obtain a quality Villanova education. However many students believe that the decision, having been made as a top-down process more for financial reasons (perceived) rather than as a result of thorough open community discussion to define purpose and educational goals, is egregious. Many understand that the changing face of higher education will include more eLearning and that the university should work to identify its place in that arena; however, there are too many unanswered questions and practicalities to proceed so abruptly.

A word on the data

A total of 156 people responded: 14 alumni, 65 faculty, 7 parents, 62 students, 4 staff members, and 4 people respondents who did not self-identify. The Faculty Congress contacted all faculty colleagues by e-mail and invited them to participate, but the Congress has no mechanism at its disposal for contacting the other constituencies.

Respectfully prepared by the Faculty Congress Executive Committee, 8 April 2013