

2010 Showcase in Excellence Award Recipient

University of Phoenix-Central Administration “Online Faculty Certification Process”



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Type of work

University of Phoenix (UOPX) offers an innovative approach to higher education focused on meeting the needs of working students. UOPX believes it is important to provide educational opportunities that are not only convenient and accessible, but also current and applicable to the real world. This philosophy is reflected in many areas throughout UOPX, including flexible scheduling, practitioner faculty and centralized managed faculty designed curriculum.

Workforce: 47,000 staff & faculty

Testimonial of Value of the Arizona Performance Excellence Award Program

“Central Administration Academic Affairs began its Continuous Quality Improvement journey many years ago with our formal participation with the Arizona Quality Alliance’s Performance Excellence Program application process. The experience provided us with many learning and process improvement opportunities beginning with the application and site visit, and concluding with the feedback report. Ultimately, our students directly benefit from our involvement with the Performance Excellence program because our ability to deliver value to our students is enhanced by producing educational programs that are cutting edge, timely, and discipline relevant.”

- Dr. Adam Honea, Senior Vice President & Provost, Central Administration Academic Affairs, University of Phoenix

Highlights of the Online Faculty Certification Process

UOPX established an Online Faculty Certification (OFC) process early in the history of our online programs. The majority of UOPX’s faculty members are associate faculty who are experienced practitioners, usually working full-time in their professions and teaching part-time. UOPX differs from traditional institutions in two key elements: an accelerated course schedule and centrally managed curriculum. Further, the University has a unique learning model that focuses on active learning, collaboration, and an emphasis on application and relevance in response to the mission of the university. For these reasons, UOPX created an internal performance-based certification program to promulgate the University’s vision. The Online Faculty Certification process is both philosophical and practical: introducing the Faculty Candidate (FC) to the University’s learning model and providing training in specific skills such as classroom management and assessing student learning. These often

are skills in which the practitioners may have no prior experience or training. The Online Faculty Certification process begins with a Faculty Recruiter who notifies the Faculty Certification Team when a Faculty Candidate is ready to begin. The Online Faculty Certification process has two phases, Faculty Certification and Mentorship. The first phase, Faculty Certification, is an intensive four-week training process administered as two modules: Core Certification (two weeks) and Specialization Certification (two weeks). All Faculty Candidates complete the Core module. After successfully completing the Core module, Faculty Candidates complete the appropriate Specialization module based on the college in which the Faculty Candidates will facilitate. The Online Faculty Certification is conducted in an online classroom and is structured to model a typical UOPX class, where the Faculty Candidate is an active participant in a classroom. Faculty Candidates are assessed weekly by the Faculty Certification Trainers on their skills demonstration and provided suggestions for improvement, using a standardized evaluation form provided by the Faculty Certification Team. When a Faculty Candidate successfully completes the first phase, Faculty Certification, the Faculty Recruiter notifies the Mentorship Team that the Faculty Candidate is ready to move on to the second phase, Mentorship. In the Mentorship phase, the Faculty Candidate works with a Mentor before, during, and after the class. The Faculty Candidate teaches the class, and the Mentor remains “behind the scenes.” Faculty Candidates are evaluated weekly by the Mentor during the Mentorship class using a standardized evaluation form provided by the Mentorship Team. Faculty Candidates are provided with advice and areas to improve. At the end of the class, the Mentor makes a recommendation to the Mentorship Team as to the preparedness of the Faculty Candidate to remove the Faculty Candidate status and join the faculty of the University. Inputs to the process are: Faculty Candidates; UOPX Colleges; Deans’ offices; Legal and Compliance departments; Faculty Certification Trainers and Mentors; and Faculty Candidates. Outputs are trained faculty. The key in-process measurement and feedback points are the following: weekly and final Faculty Certification Trainer reports; weekly and final Mentor reports; trainee end-of-course surveys (TREOCS); and the percentage of Faculty Candidates successfully completing Core and Specialized Certification. Informal process feedback points are Faculty Certification Trainer and Mentor feedback on the materials and processes.

The organizational need for the Online Faculty Certification process was recognized at the inception of our online campus. The online campus adopted the University’s unique culture in the classroom as created by the University’s visionary founder. The UOPX learning model has several essential features: active learning, collaboration, and an emphasis on application and relevance. The model is based on well-established adult learning principles that the learner’s active involvement in the learning process is essential. Faculty are expected to serve not only as teachers but also as facilitators of learning who manage the learning process by engaging learners in a variety of activities that lead students to an understanding of course content and development of academic and professional competence. There is wide agreement in education research literature that the best learning occurs when bridges are built between new knowledge and the learner’s experience, which makes learning relevant to the learners. UOPX students often say they are able to apply at work the next day what they learned in class the previous evening. UOPX determined the need for this certification process upon realizing that faculty must demonstrate a willingness and ability to conduct classes using this model; thus certification became a key requirement for becoming a successful faculty member. In addition, since the majority of the University’s faculty members are associate faculty who are active and experienced practitioners teaching part-time for the University, the need for teaching faculty members practical skills for preparing for the classroom, creating a syllabus, and preparing meaningful feedback to students as part of the grading process, was determined. Over the years, this need has been further validated by UOPX as regulatory requirements have increased for all institutions of higher education. Thus, institutions must involve faculty in meeting regulatory requirements such as accommodating ADA students, adhering to FERPA requirements, and reporting violations of the Student Code of Conduct, especially incidents of plagiarism. In FY2006, Axia College was added to University of Phoenix. At that time, Axia College had its own Online Faculty Certification process with many similar aspects, but also addressed unique faculty and student requirements for its Associate’s Degree programs. In FY2007, the Axia College and UOPX Faculty Certification processes were merged, rearranging the common content and segregating the different content to create our current Online Faculty Certification process.