

SOUTH DAKOTA BOARD OF REGENTS

Academic and Student Affairs

AGENDA ITEM: 9 – L

DATE: June 28-30, 2016

SUBJECT: Online Proctoring Strategies

Over the past few months a number of high profile reports have emerged depicting instances of academic misconduct in online and face-to-face coursework at postsecondary institutions around the country. Most recently an incident involving 85 students at [Ohio State University](#) resulted in student code of conduct sanctions after it was determined they were collaborating on online take home quizzes and examinations. Similar types of large scale reports of academic misconduct at institutions like the [University of Iowa](#) and the [U.S. Coast Guard Academy](#) resulted in a request by the Board of Regents to provide an update on the process and procedures in place within the Regental system to monitor such activity in online courses.

Currently within the Regental system instructors/departments determine what level of proctoring to require with respect to exam security and integrity. The traditional approaches include: 1) Take-home exams (e.g. essays) given under time constraints that make it difficult to obtain outside assistance; 2) The use of a Lock Down Browser (LDB) tool coupled with some sort of honor code/statement of the requirements of academic integrity; and 3) requiring proctored exams which also employs the Lock Down Browser during testing. When a non-proctored testing strategy is employed, institutional training becomes critical in encouraging instructors to use additional measures to aid in mitigating academic misconduct including:

- Less reliance on exams as part of the final grade (e.g. balancing this with other types of assessments such as essays, case studies, discussions, group work, etc.);
- Randomizing questions and answers (e.g. using pools of questions from which random questions are selected, making each exam different for each student);
- Limiting the amount of time students have to take the exam;
- Limiting the number of attempts students have to take the exam; and
- Limiting the time/amount of information released after the exam (e.g. only showing what was answered incorrectly by students, etc.);

Instructional design staff work with faculty to implement these strategies, yet there are instances where misconceptions about the utility of a Lock Down Browser may emerge. This was

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discussed by both TAC and AAC during their [July 2015](#) meeting.¹ Furthermore, of the three approaches listed above, only the latter provides for any sort of identity verification, as most proctors require students to show a university-, or government-issued ID. While non-proctored solutions may mitigate cheating, they do not guarantee that the person completing the assessment is the student.

A system requirement for proctoring of all examinations has the potential to cause a number of issues. First, there are times during the semester (mid-terms, finals, etc.) when instructors traditionally have exams making it difficult for students to schedule time to complete their examinations. Also, proctors tend to be more available during the 8-5 time block, and online students are especially more likely to not be able to test at these times due to personal/professional commitments. Students also tend to be geographically displaced, even within our own state. Many institutions have proctoring requirements that prevent students from using proctors with whom they have a personal relationship (e.g. friends, acquaintances, etc.), making it difficult to manage in small rural settings like South Dakota. One of the hallmarks/pitches for online education is so that you can complete your education anytime and anywhere. Using a proctor somewhat defeats this, as students have to be at a specific place at a specific time to take an exam. Second, for those students who are not in the area of one of the institutionally-provided testing centers, students are responsible for paying to have examinations proctored which places an additional financial burden on students.

In an attempt to address some of these concerns and begin exploring an affordable online solution for proctoring and ID verification, the Desire2Learn (D2L) Management Committee² began researching remote proctoring solutions. These solutions allow students to take exams from their desired location while being monitored via video and audio. The exigency for this review stemmed from institutional interest in finding alternatives for the growing number of online courses as well as new federal requirements in section [602.17](#) of the Higher Education Opportunity Act requires institutions to investigate “New or other technologies and practices that are effective in verifying student identification.” After a variety of tools were researched, the D2L Management Committee recommended running a pilot with Respondus Monitor, a remote proctoring solution provided by the same vendor of the LockDown Browser (LDB) tool already integrated into Desire2Learn (D2L). Beyond the financial benefits of the Monitor versus a student pay model, Monitor works just like the LDB, in terms of letting students pick when and where they can take an exam. The tool augments the LDB by recording the student’s exam session and instructors can also opt to have the student do an identity check (picture of them next to their university- or government-issued ID), and an environment check (to make sure there are no hidden resources).

¹ The AAC agenda item may be found at: https://www.sdbor.edu/administrative-offices/academics/aac/documents/5_R_AAC0715.pdf

² In 2007 the Regental system selected a common Learning Management System to coordinate the management of online material for distance and face-to-face courses. Desire2Learn was the vendor selected through an extensive RFP process and the D2L Management Committee was formed at that time to establish consistent processes for the platform, expand system integration, and evaluate new resources for E-Learning activities.

Additionally, this tool allows instructors to configure exams in a variety of ways, to best suit their testing needs. Exams can be set up to:

- Be facilitated regularly via D2L (no security);
- Be facilitated through the LDB (locking down the student's computer);
- Be facilitated only through Monitor (video/audio surveillance); and
- Be facilitated either through Monitor or a proctor (via a password the instructor sends to the proctor);

In their [June, 2014](#) meeting,³ AAC approved moving forward with a pilot of Respondus Monitor, but due to a variety of technical and procedural issues, the pilot was pushed past the start date of the 2014FA term. Because Respondus Monitor requires that students have hardware to facilitate the video monitoring aspect of the tool—namely a webcam and microphone—there was little time to inform students of this requirement, and by the time the pilot was approved by all councils, the semester had started. For this reason, the D2L Management Committee sought to extend the pilot through 2015SP. Respondus agreed to this, and with enough opportunity to inform students of the technology requirements ahead of the start of the semester, a number of pilots were set up for that term. Following the pilot, students and faculty responded to a survey which was discussed during the [June 2015](#) AAC meeting.⁴ Based on the results of the survey the recommendation from AAC was threefold:

- The system would not move forward with purchasing Monitor;
- If an individual institution wanted to move forward with a remote proctoring/ID verification tool, they should engage Respondus, as Monitor seemed to be the most economical choice, and was already integrated with D2L;
- The D2L Management Committee should continue to investigate other vendors as they become known to the system.

Since that time, the D2L Management Committee has reviewed two additional products ([Examity](#) and [Verificient ProctorTrack](#)). Both of these products were functionally similar to those previously reviewed by the committee ([Software Secure Remote Proctor Pro](#) and [ProctorU](#)) considering that they: 1) charge a per student, per exam fee; 2) have additional charges for longer exams, priority scheduling, etc.; and 3) have options to have a random selection of exams reviewed by their staff, or have the sessions proctored live. However, these services are far more expensive than Respondus Monitor, costing an average of around \$15 per student per one-hour exam. Were just ten (10) courses, each with a midterm and a final, having a roster of twenty (20) students, to operate under this model, the cost would be \$6,000. In comparison, the first-year cost of Monitor is up to \$3,950 for the entire system.⁵ Given that concerns continue to be voiced about the lack of

³ The AAC agenda item may be found at: https://www.sdbor.edu/administrative-offices/academics/aac/Documents/5_H_AAC0614.pdf

⁴ The AAC agenda item may be found at: https://www.sdbor.edu/administrative-offices/academics/aac/Documents/2015-06-AAC/5_T_AAC0615.pdf

⁵ Note: second-year costs for Monitor would be determined by the first year utilization, where the first 1,000 seats would cost \$3,950, and each addition set of 1,000 seats would cost \$1,950.

consistent proctoring requirements across the system, the committee brought recommendations forward to AAC during the [May 2016](#) meeting⁶ to facilitate a more comprehensive pilot of Respondus Monitor during the Fall 2016 term. This recommendation was approved by the Council and the D2L Management Committee has been tasked with coordinating activity with interested faculty to implement the tool for the upcoming term.

⁶ The AAC agenda item may be found at: https://www.sdbor.edu/administrative-offices/academics/aac/Documents/2016-05-AAC/5_C3_AAC0516.pdf