Virtual Office Hours:
Texas Community College Instructional Administrators
Listserv Survey, December 2009

Question: Trinity Valley Community College is investigating the option of allowing instructors to consider the addition of “virtual” office hours. Does your institution have a policy in place that allows instructors to provide a portion or all of their office hours in a virtual setting? If so, can you please provide specific details about this policy?

Amarillo College
Amarillo College does not have an official policy concerning this, however, we consider the office hours issue on a case by case basis. We have numerous instructors who teach their entire load via online ---thus we do not require on campus office hours of them-- we do require them to attend normal college functions and require them to continue to participate in committee functions. In 2008-09 I had a faculty member doing a year long fellowship at the Meninger Clinic -- Baylor School of Medicine in Houston. He also taught a full load online---obviously he had no on campus office hours but did post virtual office hours for his students.

Angelina College
No official policy at this time, but will use the results to initiate conversations about the practice.

Cisco College
All faculty must have five office hours per week during which they are available to students. The breakdown of face-to-face and virtual office hours must be approved by their Division Chair and is usually a function of the ratio of face-to-face / virtual teaching assignment.

Clarendon College
Clarendon College encourages virtual office hours but do not allow faculty to use them in place of their regular office hours.

Del Mar College
...regarding the faculty’s virtual office hours as listed on the College’s Policy Manual:

**B6.23 Office Hours: Revisions adopted April 14, 2009** (number change only) Faculty are expected to hold scheduled, posted virtual or physical office hours at least one (1) hour daily.

**B6.23.1** Virtual office hours would be proportional to the percentage of the faculty member's course load taught via distance learning with a minimum of one (1) office hour per week spent physically on campus.
**B6.23.2** Virtual office hours will allow scheduled electronic contact with students by phone, fax, internet phone, e-mail, video conferencing over IP, instant messaging, or other means of electronic contact as stated in the course syllabus.

**Kigore College**
We do not. However, if a web course is part of their regular load, they can subtract those hours (e.g., 3 hours per week) off their 30 hr. per week requirement to be on campus. The rationale is that those are the 3 hours they would be “in-class.”

**Lone Star College (System Office Response)**
The Lone Star College System does allow faculty to work a couple of hours per week from home. Our policy actually acknowledges that faculty may do some work from off campus. We require that they fulfill their office hours and are on campus 4, preferably 5 days a week. The excerpt from the policy is listed below.

*Members of the teaching faculty are expected to meet the contact hour requirements for each of the courses assigned in their respective workloads. These requirements include both synchronous and asynchronous instruction. To maximize faculty accessibility to students, it is expected that teaching faculty will be on campus a minimum of four days per week and preferably five. Office hours should be scheduled at reasonable hours, which are convenient for students, e.g., before and/or after class meetings. These office hours will be posted and included in the course syllabi.*

*It is recognized that teaching faculty may accomplish certain aspects of their teaching responsibilities off-campus, e.g., course preparation, evaluation of student work, and computer-based instruction. No specific hourly requirement shall be assigned to teaching faculty. To facilitate the calculations of negotiated workloads, a thirty-five hour faculty workweek will be the general guideline. Teaching faculty will allot sufficient time within their work week to fulfill other provisions of the workload, e.g., institutional service, committee work, and professional development. This policy shall apply during each term a faculty member is contracted to teach.*

**Lamar State College-Orange**
We do allow for virtual office hours **IF** faculty are teaching online courses. It works this way:

Faculty who are teaching online courses may schedule virtual office hours at the same percentage of required office hours as the percentage of their course load that the online course(s) represents. For example: A faculty member has a 15 credit hour load (which requires a minimum of 10 office hours). One of the courses in that load is an online course. That online course represents 20 percent of the faculty member’s load. Thus, he/she may schedule 20 percent of his/her office hours as virtual (10 X .2 = 2 hours of virtual office hours). This faculty member would have 8 office hours on campus and 2 virtually (on campus or at other locations).
We try to limit the number of online courses our faculty teach, but as we move forward we may find ourselves with faculty who are teaching ONLY online courses. We will have to revisit our policy at that point.

**Midland College**
We do allow instructors teaching on-line course to hold up to 5 of the 10 required office hours virtually.

**Navarro College**
Navarro College does not have a specific policy with regard to 'virtual office hours.' In fact, we make it clear that FULL-TIME faculty must maintain on-campus office hours (though we do not exclude faculty from maintaining virtual office hours on top of their regular office hour commitment). This rationale stems from our belief that faculty should retain a certain connectivity to campus life (attending student events, supporting clubs/programs, etc.). Being physically present on campus leads to better understanding of the culture of the college and its student body, and we believe virtual office hours (exclusively) might lead to a disconnect between faculty and campus. There are a few places in our administrative policies/procedures which back this premise:

### IV.11.10 FACULTY RESPONSIBILITIES

All faculty teaching online courses will be evaluated by the same standards, go through the same review process, and follow the same approval procedures that apply to all other instructors. Any instructor teaching a transfer online course must have the credentials established by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. The instructor of record for an online course is responsible for the delivery of instruction and for evaluation of student performance in the course. Instructors who receive development funding for creating an online course will incur a two-semester obligation to teach the online course, provided it has sufficient enrollment, and are required to keep the course updated for the duration of the textbook edition for a minimum of two semesters. Right of first refusal to teach a course will be extended to the faculty member who developed the course. If the faculty member who developed the course declines to teach the course after his/her obligation expires, another faculty member may be assigned to teach the course. The Program Assistant Dean will adjudicate any conflict and make the final decision as to the instructor of record. Part-time faculty members are eligible to request approval to develop or teach an online course but must comply with the same development guidelines and processes herein.

1. **Instructor load:** Instructors may be assigned to a maximum limit of seven courses including online and lecture courses. The minimum full-time assignment is 15 equivalent load hours.

   A. No individual full-time instructor should be scheduled for an exclusively online, hybrid or online/hybrid course load during the fall and spring semesters.

   B. Full-time faculty will be scheduled to teach a minimum of a five (5) lecture course equivalent unless a departmental need arises and the exception is approved by the Vice President of Academic Affairs or his/her designee.

   a. At least two (2) of the five (5) lecture course equivalent will be taught face/face and the remaining three (3) lecture course equivalent may be online or hybrid courses.

   C. Online or hybrid courses taught as part of the five (5) lecture course equivalent load will not receive extra compensation according to the online compensation policy.
**IV.11.11 OFFICE HOURS**
Full-time faculty must maintain on-campus office hours required in College policy [10 hours/week] regardless of how much of their instructional load consists of online assignments.

**IV.11.12 FACULTY WORKWEEK**
Consistent with college policy, faculty teaching online or hybrid courses must meet the requirements of being on campus no less than twenty-five (25) hours per week.

**IV.11.50 ONLINE INSTRUCTION TIME AND PLACE REQUIREMENTS**
Online instruction may occur in the time and place of the instructor’s choosing as long as appropriate communication with students is maintained and coordination with the department chair or assistant dean has occurred.

1. On a day when an instructor is ill or otherwise unable to meet the ordinary obligations of full-time faculty employment including on-campus duties, he/she must file an appropriate request for leave.

2. This remains true even if the instructor is partially fulfilling his/her obligations by answering email and communicating with students from an off-campus location.

**North Central Texas College**
Board policy DJ (Local) Faculty Office Hours states:

> A full-time faculty member, in consultation with the department chair, shall schedule and maintain a minimum of ten office hours per week during a long semester. **On-campus office hours shall be reduced two hours for each online class. Those office hours may be held online.** Exceptions to this office hour requirement may be allowed for extenuating circumstances with approval by the department chair and appropriate instructional dean. Factors such as laboratory hours and the number of evening and/or multi-campus teaching assignments shall be considered in regard to possible exceptions.

Although not required, online faculty are encouraged to hold their office hours for online courses “virtually” and outside of the normal 8-5 work day. Faculty may request an online office which is created using Elluminate web-conferencing software. We are in process of developing more structured guidelines for virtual office hours.

**Panola College**
We do not do virtual office hours at this time. Panola has no formal policy regarding virtual hours although there has been faculty talk of it for a couple of years.

**Sam Houston State University**
Department chairs at SHSU have authority to allow virtual office hours and determine the policy. There is nothing official of which I am aware but most chairs limit.