

Jana Walser-Smith, Director, SAN:

Record on this computer. Did you all get the message that it is now recording?

Kristen Brown:

We did.

Jana Walser-Smith, Director, SAN:

Perfect, perfect, perfect. So I'll cut this part out when we go to editing, but we're going to go ahead and get started. Hi everyone, today we are speaking with our friends from the University of Louisville about their SANSational Award-winning project related to compliance innovations. The project is titled, Elevating the Importance of Academic Compliance: A Paired Approach to Change. You'll understand that paired approach in just a little bit, but before we go further, I do want to explain just a little bit about the SANSational Awards.

These awards were established in 2015 to recognize outstanding efforts by SAN member institutions and organizations when they are developing these high quality, comprehensive solutions to state authorization challenges and state authorization issues. Their works recognized by the SANSational Awards presents solutions that meet the needs of regulators, institutions, and more particularly the needs of students. These efforts for these SANSational Award-winning projects serve as models, which can be adapted or replicated by other institutions.

So who we have here is the University of Louisville. Louisville's Kentucky's largest metropolitan area and the University of Louisville is a public research institution with 12 academic schools and colleges. The institutional project that the University worked on, again, you're going to learn more about it from our team here today, but it's really, really innovative and done quite simply. I don't want to steal any thunder, so without further ado, I'll introduce Dr. Jennifer Hurwitz and Kristen Brown from the University of Louisville. Welcome.

Jennifer Hurwitz, University of Louisville:

Thanks, Jana.

Kristen Brown:

Thanks, Jana. I'm going to kick us off and then I'm going to pass it over to Jen. So I'm just going to quickly go through just a high level overview of the University of Louisville. Jana, thank you for the introduction so much and for this opportunity to share. I guess real quick, before I jump into the presentation, I'll just give a quick highlight of who I am, my role, and where we fit within the institution, since as Jana and Jen and I were talking, we know that there's a variety of locations throughout the United States in terms of where this type of service is provided.

So I'm Kristen Brown, as Jana said, I'm the director of Online Learning here at the University of Louisville. I've been in this role here since 2011 and we've grown a lot since then. Of course, a lot of that growth has been in understanding this type of work, since this came out in 2010, 2011. We are in the Delphi Center, Jen included. We're in the Delphi Center for Teaching and Learning, and the Delphi Center is within the Office of the Provost. So my direct report is, or my supervisor, is the Vice Provost for Online Strategy and Teaching Innovation, and he reports to the provost. So that's where we sit, and that is actually a very fortunate location to be in with this role, I would say, and Jen will get into that in a little bit.

So real quick, just to follow up on what Jana was saying, we are University of Louisville, we've been founded here in Louisville since 1798. We are in the largest urban area, metropolitan area, in Kentucky. You probably know Louisville somewhat for the Kentucky Derby, the Louisville Slugger bats. I think some of you who came out here maybe, I don't know how many years ago, but we gave out those little bats as prizes. Muhammad Ali is from here, and of course, bourbon.

Even though we're urban, we have over 1,100 trees on our campus and we were designated as a Tree Campus USA by the National Arb Day Foundation. So it is a beautiful campus, you can see a little bit behind me there with the thinker of my shoulder. We're very proud of our campus community. We're recognized as being one of the nation's best institution for African American, Latinx, LGBTQ students, and we've also been designated a military-friendly school and we're one of only 80 universities in the United States to earn recognition by the Carnegie Foundation to be both a research one and community-engaged university.

We have over 23,000 students here. Of those, 3,000 are online, and those are the folks that we focus on mostly here in the Delphi Center for this type of work, although in the last few years it's been pretty broad just given the regulations. We have over 7,000 faculty and staff here and we are definitely committed to providing a quality experience for our online and campus students. So just that was a quick little plug for U of L and we're very proud of where we work. Next slide, thanks.

So again, as Jana said, we have over 12 schools and colleges here. So I think probably a lot of you can relate to the fact that that organizational structure can lead to a lot of decentralization and siloization, if that's the word, and it can really create some barriers for effectively communicating to the campus community. In our last two years, U of L has experienced a number of leadership changes. We had an interim president, we have a permanent one now, but a few years ago it was interim president, interim provost, several interim deans, I think we were up to six or seven out of the 12, so it was a lot. So that really presented a challenge for implementing change because most people in leadership roles were interested in steadying the ship versus rocking the boat. So we had to think about that in terms of the context of how to really be effective in communicating what was required.

So on the next slide, thanks. So in addition to those leadership changes and the interim field roles, we are still adjusting to what this new normal is, because a lot of things happened, as we all know, besides the pandemic. In July 2020, the department included all modalities for the professional licenser disclosures in the revised regulatory language. So our focus, Jen's role, Distance Education Compliance Manager, we're really focused on distance at Online Ed, but then these regulations, this regulatory language, really made things complex because there's nobody in the University who's really paying attention to it at the level we are.

Additionally, our campus community really, because of the pandemic, there was a lot more interest in online courses. We mostly focus on online programs here, but online courses is higher. There's more students taking only online courses than there are students enrolled in fully online programs. So it was just going, and it's really increased significantly, but there's no real guardrails in terms of quality, so there's a lot of push and pull regarding the quality of online courses here.

Then the last thing is we experienced personnel change. Our Distance Ed Compliance Manager before was Cathleen Karinsky, actually, and she left in 2021. Yeah, 2021. So Jen filled that role two years ago, she started in November, so there was a change there. So that all led to an opportunity to reassess the most strategic way, method engagement, to communicate with University leaders for state optimization issues, and just broadly speaking, academic compliance issues. So that's high level, just kind of the context of where we were. So given that context, Jen had to come up with a new strategy, and I'm going to let her explain that.

Jennifer Hurwitz, University of Louisville:

Thank you, Kristen. So I think the primary issue from us, and Kristen alluded to this a little bit, is one that I think some of my colleagues have also expressed in previous sessions, whether it's the SAN Open Forum or other sessions, SAN Basics Workshop, and that is that sometimes our colleagues don't seem to fully understand the extent of academic compliance and how far it can reach into all aspects of the University. So as Kristen mentioned, we are housed within, so we being the Online Learning Team, is housed within the Delphi Center for Teaching and Learning. So my role as Distance Education Compliance Manager to some seemed confusing, regarding why was I trying to communicate to them if they were part of what they consider to be an on campus program? So as Kristen also mentioned, we have students who are now taking online courses and we're seeing a higher rate of that, and so some of these compliance issues touch online courses and not just online programs. So it was really about trying to build that awareness institution-wide.

So as Kristen mentioned, we're decentralized and siloed. We're a large institution. She showed you the slide of 12 colleges and schools, so that's a lot of people to try to make sure that they are all aware of the academic compliance issues that we see, and so just trying to make sure that everyone understood how this really could have an impact on the work that they were doing. All right, so that led me to a revelation. About six months into the Distance Education compliance manager role, I really took a step back and decided that I needed to approach this role in a more strategic way in order to be able to elevate the concerns that I was having around academic compliance. In order to do this, I decided that building trust with leadership was going to be paramount to achieving my goals in this role.

So from previous work experiences, what I had found was that when leadership prioritizes an issue, then the staff are going to prioritize that issue. So I really started to think in a more strategic way about how I could get on their radar at all levels of leadership. So of course, we're not talking infiltrating the President's Office, but we are talking about more mid-level administrative roles where they are out in the academic units and can convey this message to those academic units. So definitely connecting with leadership and communicating that with them in an effective way was key to being able to elevate the importance of academic compliance issues.

All right, so of course, this did not happen instantaneously. Kristen and I had many conversations about how we could really tackle this issue, and as I said, find a strategic way to do so. We did consider alternative approaches, and one of those alternative approaches was to change the position title. So Distance Education Compliance Manager, to some, conveys a very specific message. So that was one thing that we considered, but we decided not to go that route.

Another consideration was moving this position to a completely different unit, and I will talk about the unit that we potentially considered, but we also didn't go that route. There are some reasons for that, which I'll talk about. Then creating a brand new committee, that was another option that we did consider. But we decided we weren't going to take any of those approaches and we went with the path of least resistance. We took a look at where the key stakeholders were, where there was time on their calendars. Oops, sorry. There we go. Where there was time on their calendars. We really looked at where I could go into those meetings and present on issues related to academic compliance in order to elevate those concerns.

So this is where we come into the compliance innovation. So the paired approach to change that we took, we looked at the meetings and we identified the Higher Education Act regulations monthly meeting as a key meeting where we were already talking about how to increase and maintain University leadership awareness regarding academic compliance issues. You'll see there in the box at the bottom the different leadership levels across campus that were represented at this specific meeting. This meeting had been in place for several years and the Distance Education Compliance Manager helped to

coordinate the meeting, so this was an obvious first choice for Kristen and I as one way to help build that trust with University leadership and to elevate the importance of academic compliance.

The second meeting is the associate deans' monthly meeting, and this meeting, the purpose of this meeting is to make sure that the associate deans are receiving the most important information and then also taking that information and disseminating it through all avenues to their colleagues in the academic units. So really making sure that, when there's an issue, that their colleagues are also aware of that and that they understand what it is that needs to happen at the academic unit level. Then the list of attendees for this meeting includes the various vice provosts and then also all the associate deans. Some colleges and schools at our institution have more than one, and so there are a couple associate deans in some of these schools and colleges. Then this meeting also includes other invited speakers from campus units. So whenever there's something that needs to be discussed, then members across the institution will come to this meeting.

Okay, so next I'll talk about some of the process steps, and this is with the hope that others out there in our SAN community can potentially take this strategy and adapt it to make it their own. So the first step was building trust with the key stakeholders in our campus community to make sure that they understood the issues and concerns that I was most concerned about and why, really breaking it down into consumable pieces of information because, as we all know, the federal regulations often are not easily digestible. So taking that information and providing information that is easy to understand for the stakeholders, and also letting them know what actions need to be taken, if any.

So we developed this list of key stakeholders and who we were trying to reach and identified where these key stakeholders would be. So we reviewed the existing meetings and then we obtained permission to attend those meetings. As I had mentioned, the HEA regulations monthly meeting, I was already coordinating, so it didn't take any special permission. We were already coming up with the agenda items and really making sure that the issues we were most concerned about were being talked about in that meeting, but the associate deans meeting was definitely one that took a little bit more time.

Also, in my role, I was trying to make sure that the information that I was presenting at the associate deans meeting, that there was a strategy behind that. So really trying to let them know what exactly this is all about and how it impacts them. So again, making sure that they understood and knew why the Distance Education Compliance Manager was talking to all associate deans and not just those associate deans with online programs in their units.

Now talking about the pros and cons, I guess, of this approach. So the pro is definitely, the largest benefit is that this is, from a monetary sense, a low cost or no cost option, so that is key. Likely most of us are experiencing budgetary constraints, and so this is a strategy that can easily be adopted, but however, it takes time. So this is probably the biggest downside. In terms of how long this took, as I said, it took about six months for me to get my feet under me and really learn all the ins and outs of this role. Then it took another maybe six months to develop what I put together, which was a compliance calendar for the associate dean's meeting, and to really have a strategy of the type of information that I wanted to present there.

So overall it took, I would say around a year for me to have a process in place that I felt comfortable with and that I could take and use from year-to-year, so I would say that that was the downside to this approach. I just wanted to share our contact information. So Kristen can be contacted related to this, and also myself, if you have any questions or would like some additional information about this approach for our SAN friends.

Jana Walser-Smith, Director, SAN:

[inaudible 00:19:24] great. Jennifer, one of the things that you said was really impactful, this is a project that probably any institution can put together because of cost. It isn't cost prohibitive, but getting that buy-in from senior leadership to allow you to present, how difficult was that?

Jennifer Hurwitz, University of Louisville:

I will say that Kristen's support was absolutely critical, and it is very important that your immediate supervisor helps to make those connections and to help you navigate what is typically a very bureaucratic system. So figuring out who are the key individuals that you need to be connected with and then begin building those relationships.

Jana Walser-Smith, Director, SAN:

So is that the advice you would give someone who would be thinking about implementing something like that, first step?

Jennifer Hurwitz, University of Louisville:

Yes.

Jana Walser-Smith, Director, SAN:

Make a list of your key stakeholders. What else would you advise that person?

Kristen Brown:

Can I add that real quick before you jump in? It is just that, thank you, Jen, I 100% supported Jen in this, but we had also the benefit of the fact that at that time I was an interim associate provost. So I had a seat at the table with the folks that were in charge of those meetings, so I had more, quote unquote, "influence" than I do back in my director role. Having said that, I know that our current vice provost still supports it. So yes, I was important, but I really do feel like if you can get the voice of the people who are your peers, who are the leaders, that really helps a lot. So back to Jen.

Jennifer Hurwitz, University of Louisville:

Yes, thank you, Kristen. You said that very eloquently, and I wasn't sure whether to provide that insight or not, but it definitely did help.

Jana Walser-Smith, Director, SAN:

So again, that second piece, list your stakeholders, again, having that seat at the table. So do you suggest that top-down approach? Is that what you would tell someone trying to do this, hey, start with your senior leadership and get that buy-in and go at it that way? What would you say?

Jennifer Hurwitz, University of Louisville:

Yes. Well, I mean, I think that it really is important to have more than one approach to this. While you're doing that, you're also building those relationships with others who maybe are at the same level as you to build your community within the institution. So I will say that the Office of Academic Planning and Accountability is one place where we have really tried to build those relationships because they work with the academic units and the academic units can see how their work applies. So helping to get those individuals to be part of your community and also to understand the issues that you're trying to help with and help them to see how those issues impact.

Jana Walser-Smith, Director, SAN:

So when you thought about this approach in post, as Cheryl likes to say sometimes, postmortem, that sounds so [inaudible 00:23:02], are there things that you would've done differently? What would you do differently?

Jennifer Hurwitz, University of Louisville:

Yes. Well, I think in the time, this worked, and for the reason that Kristen said. I think looking back, and I've heard from others in our SAN community, that being housed within that Office of the Provost, and almost like if you're thinking about in the actual office setting where your door is across the aisle or hallway, having that direct connection with the Provost Office I do think could be one way to approach this differently. You may have a faster on-ramp to some of this, it may not take quite as much time if you are in that position.

Jana Walser-Smith, Director, SAN:

So when thinking about the most difficult aspect of this project, could you name an area that you felt like was most challenging, that give our people a heads-up to say, hey, this may take longer, or you may want to concentrate or spend more time here?

Jennifer Hurwitz, University of Louisville:

So I would say the most difficult part was just the disbelief, generally, that this is a thing. We hear this in our SAN Open Forums and on the webinars, that this is common, that many individuals do not understand how this could actually impact them. So I think that is the piece that's most difficult, is really explaining this in a way that makes sense to others people who work within our institution and helping them to understand why this is important, and also the department's view on why this is important.

Kristen Brown:

Yeah, if I could add to that, the other thing too, and this has kind of been stated throughout, but the importance of Jen getting in... The monthly meeting with the folks and the VPs is great, but we really got to have face time with the units. So that associate deans meeting, and then Jen created that compliance calendar, it was so critical in order to have that continuity of understanding because we would have those monthly meetings and every month we'd have to reexplain what the issues were. We'd have to re-say, "This is what decision you made last time," to people who were decision makers because they were kind of backpedaling and being like, they want to do something different.

So Jen started documenting decisions made and sharing that out with everybody saying, "These are the decisions that were made," but it wasn't quite good enough. Once you get it in front on a monthly basis with a lot of people, so questions being asked, it's like, I mean, she only has five to 10 minutes at those associate deans meetings, not long, but just it's that repetition, that continuity of understanding, that really makes a difference in getting the community to understand this is a real thing. It has implications for students, and really focusing on the students as well [inaudible 00:26:17].

Jennifer Hurwitz, University of Louisville:

I will say, to what Kristen just said, I am mostly remote in my position, but the associate deans meeting, I felt that it was very important for me to be there in the room. They can put a face with a name, with an email that they receive. I do think in certain contexts that that is critical to helping to form those relationships from the beginning so that they also then know, like when an issue comes up in their

academic unit, oh, you need to reach out to Jennifer Hurwitz, she's the Distance Education Compliance Manager, she can help you with that. So that just familiarity with you is very helpful and an important piece.

Jana Walser-Smith, Director, SAN:

Perfect. I do want to touch on one thing that you spoke to earlier. You spoke to the fact that you contemplated changing the title of the position. Was that because you felt like a different title may carry more weight or what was that about?

Jennifer Hurwitz, University of Louisville:

Yes, for the most part. Also, I felt like if we removed the Distance Education piece from the title and just had a title that was speaking broadly to academic compliance, that maybe more individuals, more of our campus community, may see how this work could impact their work. So that was the main piece.

Jana Walser-Smith, Director, SAN:

What made you decide to stay with it? I'm sorry, Kristen.

Kristen Brown:

No, it's okay. I'll just finish that thought too, is that when we were meeting with the monthly group, trying to push this understanding that this cannot just be us and here's why, we need more help with this, somebody said, because we have the person who's in charge of University Compliance there, she said something like, "Yeah, this isn't us because," she said, "We really need somebody who does academic compliance." Maybe, Jen, you said it. Somebody said that phrase, "Academic compliance," and we're like, oh, right, nobody's thinking about academic compliance. They're thinking about university compliance, Title IV, Title IX, this kind of stuff, but really the academic piece of it. So that's when we thought, oh, okay, yeah, this distance ed is just a slice, academic is much bigger. So anyway, so back to your question, Jana, why did we decide not to change? Go ahead, Jen.

Jennifer Hurwitz, University of Louisville:

Yeah, I think that we were still thinking about that path of least resistance. So I alluded to that in the slide, that this was something that wouldn't require additional paperwork, which if you change a title, I assume there's paperwork involved with that at the University level. I also felt like it was important, that building those relationships in other units was going to be an important piece of this. So regardless of whether the title changed or not, I was still going to need support and assistance and buy-in from others in our campus community, and so I think that was [inaudible 00:29:32].

Kristen Brown:

Yeah, and I'll add to that. I mean, when we hired for this role, when Catherine started it in 2014, I don't know, she was a temp and then became permanent, it really was just state authorization. That's where it started, state authorization. But because we were part of this awesome SAN community where there's all of these policy implications coming from the regulations that were beyond online learning, that's what kind of triggered us to say, "Okay, I guess we have to start paying attention to this stuff now." But we were the only ones paying attention, and Distance ED still requires a lot of attention, but it's broader than that. So our responsibility here in the Delphi Center for online is for online learning, it is not for the rest of the University, so we needed the University to care about this. So changing Jen's title would've

been fine, but I didn't want the role to become the broad role because I needed her to focus on Distance Ed and I needed somebody else outside the Delphi Center to focus broadly.

Jana Walser-Smith, Director, SAN:

Perfect, that's a great point, so thank you for that. I was just so excited about this project because, in its purest forms, it seems really simple, but it added so much complexity to the buy-in, to the discussion, to bringing it to the higher level so that everyone across campus will better understand the focus and what the responsibilities were as it relates to distance education compliance. So you guys are so deserving and so, so very happy that you were awarded. It's again, very simple, and also very doable, but still very impactful. So for that, I want to thank you for sharing this with our community and sharing your time with me today. Thank you so much, we appreciate you here.

Kristen Brown:

Thank you.

Jennifer Hurwitz, University of Louisville:

Well, thank you, Jana.

Kristen Brown:

Yes, thank you so, so much.

Jennifer Hurwitz, University of Louisville:

[inaudible 00:31:30].

Kristen Brown:

Yeah. Thank you, Jen.