

Attending: Present: Enid Carlson-Nagel, Cheryl Cluchey, Ellen Haneline , Bill Knapp, Elaine McCullough, Dave Nicol, Robbie Teahen , and John Urbanick

Absent: Gloria Lukusa-Barnett, Leonard Johnson, Kristen Salomonson

Old Business

1. Update on applications support person in IT – John Urbanick

The IT department has developed a position description that is being reviewed by several others. Posting is anticipated in January 2009 with a hire to follow as soon as possible but not likely before early March. The position is being funded by the President's office for Year 1.

2. Update on student online readiness and orientation – Bill Knapp and Enid Carlson-Nagel

At a prior meeting, the group had expressed concern about there being no minimum requirement for students accessing fully online courses. Progress continues with the development of online student readiness modules. Consensus is that there should be two levels of student readiness assessments. One level would be the university-wide minimum expectations that would be very limited, such as a student's having to demonstrate that they can log into the system, upload documents, post a comment, and other minimum requirements. This should be required of all students. The second level would be anything additional that individual courses, programs, or Colleges want to develop and/or require. This level of readiness would be determined at the course and/or program levels. These orientations will be developed by those who know the particular requirements of their courses or programs. Sample materials will be gathered and a learning repository developed over time that could be used by faculty in the Colleges.

The next steps are that Bill and others will identify what those few simple tasks would include and develop an instrument that would assess these. We will check with the Testing Office to see if they can monitor students' performance on these "assessments," and to check with Records about whether we can add a notation on the student record indicating that they have completed the requirement, so they are not held up from registering for online courses. The FSUS 100 course is also to be considered as a place where this preliminary instruction (up to an hour) and assessment could occur – which would reach the majority of Ferris students from here on.

It was reaffirmed that it is not the responsibility of FCTL to provide this student service. However, FCTL personnel will provide leadership for development of the instrument. They will also contribute to the development and promotion of materials that will assist students to develop the required skills. This continuing support may best be provided by TAC, which is another conversation that will be required.

Enid Carlson-Nagel, working with FCTL, will also assure that materials that have been developed, discovered, and continue to be developed are accessible to faculty. She and others will also communicate the availability of these resources that can be adapted or adopted. Our goal should be to provide assistance with materials that will shorten the development time for faculty.

3. Update on recording technology implementations – John Urbanick and Enid Carlson-Nagel

Webex is rapidly gaining acceptance and use. Discussion centered on the questions of costs and how these will be prorated for the future. It appears that Pharmacy is the highest user. The expectation is that the increased costs with the use of Webex will be offset by the reduced costs of travel and the enhanced quality of communications. Determining whether these intended benefits are derived will be challenging. It is imperative that we provide the Colleges with information about their use costs, that are being paid for through Academic Affairs this year, so they can be included in their budget planning. There is some concern about how these costs will be accommodated in future years and that guidance will be required about the times when its use is most appropriate. Guidance should be provided to the colleges.

Tegrity use will begin in January 2009 with about 10 pilot users. This implementation has been significantly delayed because of competing demands in IT.

New Business

1. FAQs for Online Learning at Ferris – Robbie Teahen

As a result of a number of comments and questions in recent weeks, a decision to produce a Frequently-Asked-Question document. A very sketchy draft of that document was provided and the first “answers” were reviewed by the group. The document will be further developed and brought back to the next meeting and after approval will be posted on the online learning webpage as well as be distributed campus-wide.

2. Review organizational models for online learning in higher education – Enid Carlson-Nagel

Enid reviewed the research that she has been conducting over the past year into various practices concerning online learning in other institutions. In general, the findings are that there are many different models in use. Continuing education is a common location for the online initiatives since they frequently serve distant students. Representative models were reviewed and a chart that tried to capture the current Ferris model across the three major involved divisions (Administration and Finance; Academic Affairs; and Student Affairs). That document, as updated in the meeting, is appended as a part of these minutes. There was extensive discussion about others’ models and current Ferris practices. The group concludes that a variety of models can be effective, that there are benefits and drawbacks to each, and that crafting a model that works with where Ferris is now and where it wants to be must become a priority.

3. Discuss: How should Ferris organize and deliver their online learning – determine a date for decision and develop a strategy for implementation.

Recognizing that budget requests will be due early in 2009, the group agreed to participate in a lengthy meeting on January 9 to further explore this agenda item and to develop both a recommendation and strategies for implementation going forward.

Fees

There was conversation about whether a fee should be added for online students. Some feel costs of online instruction are higher. Others feel on-campus is higher, because of infrastructure of buildings, classroom technology, heating, lights, maintenance, etc. It was determined that we need to have a better picture of comparative costs of online and face-to-face, which should be available since we have budgets and SCH that would provide at least a rough estimate of per-unit costs.

There was conversation about whether there should be differential rates for on-campus vs. off-campus students. Some thought on-campus could be higher, to discourage their enrollment since they are able to take a face-to-face section; others thought it could be cheaper for the on-campus because they may require fewer student outreach services.

A major dilemma is determining who the on-campus vs. off-campus student is. Even their coding is not always clear, because a student commuting from any distance (10 miles, 50 miles, 200 miles) to a program that is “offered” through the main campus would appear as an on-campus student, when in fact they may never be on the campus if the courses for the program are fully online. Kristin will be asked to provide some guidance on how we distinguish a student who does take courses on this campus vs. one who is at a distance, if this distinction becomes important.

Providing a Quality, Consistent Educational Product

Concerns about both quality and consistency were reviewed. Various models exist at Ferris and elsewhere for maintaining quality and consistency. For example, CCHS 101 has 15-20 sections and 12 instructors. One person developed the course and others use it. Another model is the Master Instructor to develop the course. That individual gets paid a different amount for teaching, while others are paid as instructors/facilitators – could be full-time or adjunct faculty. With consistent model, we could better assure quality across the board. It is also more economical to have one well developed model that multiple individuals use. Master instructors would be determined on a course-by-course basis – not unlike the lead instructor concept or the faculty mentor.

Question was raised about areas where there are multiple “masters,” such as in English where there are several developing and delivering.

There was general consensus (not yet a recommendation) that by next fall, any faculty member teaching fully online should be able to demonstrate at least Level 3 competency. An additional target would be that by the following fall all instructors would demonstrate this level of competency. With more than 400 faculty trained in the use of FerrisConnect, this may not be an unreasonable expectation. What the FerrisConnect training has not done to date is to “certify” competency; rather, we have certified participation.

Program coordinators and educational counselors are key to working within the Colleges individually about the course schedules best suited to their needs. To date, coordinator/department head/chair roles have been limited in the online environment.

Some believe there should be a requirement for faculty who are teaching fully online to work with instructional designers. This emerges from the knowledge that the online classroom is significantly different from the face-to-face classroom and requires different classroom management and instructional skills.

More peer review needs to be encouraged. At the program level, faculty are best able to provide a review of the validity of content, the integrity of the course, and the appropriateness of planned assessments. At present, it is only when a course is paid for in development that there is requirement to consult an instructional designer. It is a minimum number of the offered courses that are being paid for development, so no review processes are inherently built in.

Many institutions require the online course review, and some use the Sloan Quality Matters rubric for this purpose. Many institutions require that faculty who teach online must be trained. Process needs to be developmental not punitive.

Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held on Friday, January 9, 2009, from 10 a.m. until 3 p.m. – or as late as required to develop a plan for submission to the Vice President for Academic Affairs and for budget requirements for continued development.