

Present: Stacy Anderson, Marilyn Bejma, Cheryl Cluchey, Elise Gramza, Leonard Johnson, Elaine McCullough, David Nichol, Theresa Raglin, Larry Schult, Todd Stanislav, Robbie Teahen, Michelle Teschendorf, Deb Thalner and Spencer Tower

Call to Order: 10:08 a.m.

We welcome as guests today: Chuck Drake (COET), Cheo Lee (COB), David Marion (COB) and Jim Nystrom (CAS), who all sit on the Academic Policy and Standards Committee.

Student Readiness Assessment

Deb reported that the group recognizes the need for a long-term solution to this issue. Student readiness is recommendation #1 in our Recommendations for E-Learning for Ferris presented to the Academic Senate earlier this year.

The subcommittee would like to do a pilot this summer and conduct a survey to see if we are on the right track before we go further. We have identified some hard skills (e-mail reply, attachments, discussion threads, viewing grades, etc.).

SmarterMeasure is a tool that many community colleges use. It identifies soft skills, such as comprehension of what's on the screen, self-motivation, keeping on track, etc. A lengthy report is given at the end which provides some links for external resources. The assessment consists of seven different areas, and takes about 30-40 minutes to complete. We have narrowed it down to three pertinent areas.

Captivate videos go along with the Atomic Learning videos to demonstrate the skills. Estimated total student time will be 30 minutes. We are hoping to have some into FSUS and transfer orientations before fall. We are also working on students who transfer to Big Rapids. The possibility of grandfathering in students who have already taken classes online and achieved at least a B grade is being considered.

In order to reach online students in locations such as Colorado or Alaska, it was suggested we do a live presentation at the beginning of each semester, with remote centers hooked into the room, taping it for use as a learning tool.

We discussed whether or not an assessment should be required before a student can take an online course. We already require it of our freshmen for fully online and web-enhanced classes. FSUS has an already full syllabus.

Robbie reported that at a trainers' meeting, several volunteered to work with FSUS people to have a uniform presentation so students can see how an online course should look, and the instructors will be using the tool to teach the course.

We do have an online orientation for online students, and we need to make this a requirement. This ties into the emphasis we have on retention and student success. We have to create something that is broad enough so that it fits more than one group of students. Some students come to us as upper classmen and never see FSUS.

We will address the common look and feel when we work on Quality course work. The course shell will meet quality design standards. Faculty may change it if they want, but we hope it will be nice enough that they will want to use it as is.

A big question still is how we get in front of the registration.

Leonard suggested we design a game app that students could play on their iPhones (Angry Bulldogs?).

How are we going to put into and track in Banner who has completed the assessment? The process will be worked on. It will cost money; but if we retain more students, it will be worth it. At some point there will need to be an estimate of what this will cost, and the Provost will approve or ask us to come up with a more economical way to do it.

Our current recommendation is that students will pay no extra for the assessment.

Dave Marion asked if there is any way to do this automatically, and Cheryl replied that every way we come up with still needs to be manually looked at.

Deb asked how we get faculty to put it into their courses. Approach some who are teaching summer online and ask them to do it and compare it to those who do not use it. We do not anticipate much resistance.

We considered trying to target only students who have not previously taken an online course, but maybe just being new to BlackBoard would warrant taking the assessment training.

Robbie commented that people are surprised at how different BlackBoard 9.1 is, and reminded us to call our technical support to inform them of any issues.

In spite of the fact that if we require the assessment completion before being able to register for online classes, and we drop unsuccessful students, we will lose tuition, our emphasis should be first on student ability to complete the assessment, and secondarily on student credit hours. Support for requiring the assessment will also help to get students through with a lower debt level.

Adding a module would be fairly simple to do. FSUS already teaches some SmarterMeasure, so adding Captivate should be reasonable.

Soft skills seem like an excellent assignment as these are the kinds of things students will definitely do in the classroom.

Elaine asked if we should have a "Plan B" for students who register as the class is starting. Some classes are just six weeks in summer. CAHS is the only college that has 100-level courses online. Deb felt that if we make the assessment a requirement, we could ask students to take it the day they are registering and ask, "Call me back in an hour when you've completed the assessment."

Once students are admitted, they could take the assessment before they even know when they want to register for an online class.

We agreed that we will go ahead with the pilot for this summer and see what happens.

Robbie distributed copies of a draft of the Student Assessment policy so that we have something to inform campus that this is coming in September. She will also e-mail it to the group for feedback.

Jim asked E-MAT to draft this, and Academic Policy and Standards Committee can review and edit it. We have three months, and he would like to create three policies before summer.

The message we want to broadcast is that student success depends on their proficiency. How we will do this is a work in progress.

Stacy suggested comparing our policy to those of our competitors in the state. If most online programs are doing assessment, we should be perceived as requiring more. Deb will check on what others are doing. She feels a lot of schools seem to do some kind of "Am I Ready?" or "Do You Know What You Are Getting Into?" assessment. It is definitely to our advantage to be upfront with the students right from the start. We need to be more pro-active in doing everything we can to help students succeed.

Let's include the training along with the assessment, rather than giving students a "do-or-die" impression when they take the assessment.

We need to convey to faculty that this is not a barrier to what we want; and once a student has demonstrated competency, he will not be required to do an assessment again.

If there could be consistency in the shell appearance, and the assessments are assignments, faculty will be reinforcing these skills.

Many FSUS classes are taught by non-faculty, but there are many things they can use to demonstrate skills that could be attached. Shelly VandePanne does send out a list of all the things to be covered in FSUS, and she could state that all these things could be covered in BlackBoard. Entering data for non-traditional students may be a more manual process, and students that have been on campus but haven't taken online will also need another approach.

What do we do about testing? There is nothing in the recommendations about testing. Does a professor have to do this all by himself?

Cheryl has had students in other states drop because they cannot get to our testing centers. There are some certified testing centers around the country that maybe we should become affiliated with. We should try to get a policy on this in place by spring.

On the student readiness assessment pilot for summer, we are going to proceed with the plan we have, we will find faculty who will be willing to work with us. We'll start working on a policy and disseminate a draft to get feedback.

How do we communicate our intention? Elaine will put a notice into her newsletter, but we need to also broadcast it into multiple venues. Jackie Hughes may be able to help. Mary Holmes and others can get a list of who has an online course this summer, and we'll send a targeted e-mail to those. We should reassure faculty that this is not a test of them, but ask them if we are assessing the right common activities.

All colleges except Pharmacy and Optometry are represented here in E-MAT, and **every one of us who represents a college is committed to taking the message back to our colleges.**

Stacy feels every student needs these skills, not just those taking a fully online course. She will try to provide anecdotal information to our group from her experiences in FLITE.

Robbie will e-mail to our committee this draft and we might be able to edit it by e-mail for our next meeting. We will send this on to the Policy Committee after that.

David Marion asked to be invited to future E-MAT meetings, and Marilyn will add David's name to our distribution list and invite him to future meetings.

Deb reported that there is a procedure already in place for off-campus. She will send it to David Marion for dissemination to his committee. A policy for students in distant states has not been created yet.

Robbie reported that there are 1145 classes in FerrisConnect that by August have to be in BlackBoard. Please create a sense of urgency that FerrisConnect is going away. The ones who have been teaching in the platform have found the learning curve to be longer than anticipated. Those who have experience advise **do not migrate the course, you will spend more time fixing it than it would to create it anew in BlackBoard.**

Jim mentioned that last year he got a check-off sheet by course. If that course is not checked off, the department heads need to know.

Robbie reminded us, also, that if an instructor does not want to teach that course online, someone else will be found. Teaching online is voluntary.

If people need help, there is no excuse for not getting help. There are many ways to get help. Don't let the lack of assistance be the barrier.

Certification at different levels was given in FerrisConnect. It is still available in Quality Matters. Contact Sheila MacEachron for help.

NEXT MEETING

Thursday, February 16, 2012 10:00 am to 11:30 pm CSS-302

Meeting adjourned at 11:34 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Marilyn Bejma