Present: Marilyn Bejma, Cheryl Cluchey, Teresa Cook, Elise Gramza, Leonard Johnson, Meegan Lillis, David Nicol, Larry Schult, Robbie Teahen (via phone), Spencer Tower and John Urbanick

Joining us as guests today are Bea Griffith-Cooper and Randy Vance.

Call to Order: 10:35 am

Robbie reminded the group that an additional meeting is scheduled for May 12 for 1) continued review of recommendations, and 2) a recommendation for a Course Management system.

Cheryl Cluchey reported that the decision has been made to hire Eduventures to do all the background work and instruct us in the next steps to recruit and offer online courses in other states, as we will have to have approval of such states beforehand once the new regulations are in effect July 1 of this year. The members-only price we will pay is $20,000. Cheryl inquired of Eduventures if internships in other states, as well as students in the military, fall under the new regulations; and the company will investigate and give her an answer. She also will be attending their annual meeting in Boston to learn more and report back to us.

Dave reported that at the Academic Core Review Town Hall meeting yesterday, Fritz made the comment that he is expecting from our group a recommendation on course management system and where things were situated. This would include details of where online delivery will occur.

Robbie responded that initially it was specifically stated that our group was not to deal with structure. Implementation, however, is a reasonable expectation. We just haven't gotten that far. We have heard from many that they want some kind of controll process.

Bea presented a slide show on Promoting Quality Online Learning at Ferris State: Making Sense of the Models, as well as distributing copies of the presentation and an update from the Best Practices committee. These documents are also on Ferris's wiki website. We do not have an overarching model, and Florida State College's Virtual College model is a proven example of one. FSU Best Practices spans the four pillars shown in the model. It doesn't manage in depth, but it does speak to each one of the pillars. Currently, we gather data but don't do anything with the data. We want to evaluate our courses, investigate why students are not learning in certain classes, and then fix it.

Robbie asked how many committee members were actively engaged in the development of best practices; and Bea answered that all the faculty listed in the second group on slide #2 were involved, and Meegan Lillis will become more involved in the future.

Robbie then asked how substantial were the former best practices, and is the current version more or less substantial. Randy Vance answered that in the first version, there weren't a lot of elements that speak to design, assessment, etc. in a substantial way. The second version reorganized a lot of these elements. The first had a lot of specifics to the course management we were using at the time. Now we are trying to keep it independent.

Bea stressed that we need to think about a model such as this to retain students through graduation. Graduation numbers are down nationally, and we need to take a look at our high-risk courses and establish a plan of continuous improvement. She and Todd are working on a model of course evaluation that goes to the student experience. We need a clear leadership structure, and this should not necessarily be the Faculty Center.

John commented that our online-learning environment should be as good as our face-to-face classes. How do the face-to-face classes compare in their retention numbers?

We need to have an institutional or at least divisional standard that administrators will enforce. There should be an intervention after two semesters of 20-30% drop-out rates. Our spring data will be published soon for us to review.

Bea agreed that after seeing the numbers, we must do something with them. Best practices will continue the data model for course improvement, but maybe a visit to Florida State to adapt their model to Ferris would be in order. Robbie commented that John went with a group to visit Central Florida a while ago, and maybe planning a big event to bring some people from Florida State here would work better.

Bea felt that we should consider a method that has a cycle of improvement built into it. Bea has reviewed a COI instrument from Canada, which is a set of questions in three distinctive parts, and will share it with our group. Our goal approach should be as constructive as possible, and yet foster taking the information and interpreting and applying it.

We have been publishing data showing all courses and drop-out rates for years, so the data is there for the colleges to use. Unfortunately, the numbers get looked at and nothing changes. Our job is to change that climate.

Leonard felt we should identify all the non-completers and find out what caused them to drop out, then use that information to develop some kind of rubric to look at courses and make sure that things are changed in future courses.

We have no mechanisms to use to enforce quality. Although deans have the authority to decide if a course is taught online or not, the problem typically is with the instructor; and changing instructors becomes more involved.

We must assure that the analyses get back to faculty and then follow up on what can be done to improve the course.

We should tend not to look at a single semester, but a high incidence of failure should be addressed. We don't necessarily have the ability to force change.

Bea felt we are seeing more movement toward improving, and grassroots effects at the course level are the best way to drive this forward. FSU doesn't now have a good instrument to get good, consistent feedback. She feels this is a very statistically sound instrument.

Leonard stated that we need a place in the formal academic review process for a request for data related to the online courses. Robbie added that it should be integrated into ongoing operations, and takes a look at targeting some courses over a period of three years then ask for some action from the colleges on those courses. We have such limited support available; we need to be supplying a higher level of support than we have the capacity to do.

Dave felt the Provost should hold deans responsible for responding to situations and reporting what has been done. They should have a responsibility to report back to the Provost.

Terry reported that the Academic Senate will hear the Core Review Team's recommendations on May 16, and suggested having an Online Learning Center in our proposed university structure with the same administrative level as a Graduate Student Center. Cheryl felt this should not be just the centralized location of Big Rapids because many students who would utilize it are off-campus. CPTS is looked at as

just administering courses that belong to the different colleges. Will someone in CPTS have the authority to approach an instructor and point out that his/her course is not working?

We must decide what are the consequences if there is no improvement in a course? Leonard felt faculty as a group should handle this with peer pressure during course reviews. Robbie state that this must happen in current and future levels, it has to happen at the dean level, and it has to happen at the faculty level.

Bea felt it would be interesting to see how this happens at Florida's Virtual College, although their faculty structure is quite different that ours. Terry commented that adjunct faculty are told that if they do not follow certain procedures, they will not teach, and we do not have the ability to deal with tenure-track faculty in the same manner.

Since our group visited UCF, the state of the art has changed dramatically. Maybe it is time to send another group to see what the current state of the art is, or invite a group in to visit us. We could look into the possibility of following up with Schilke by way of a teleconference at a future E-MAT meeting.

If we are sincerely interested in retention, we need to convey that to our instructors. Creating that awareness can, just in itself, cause people to function differently, realizing that some faculty who have high drop-out rates will blame this on the students.

There is a real need for a system of accountability; and we should decide if the FCTL may be the unit to talk to instructors – which is more threatening and which is more productive? Another possibility is the tenure committees. We must consider that we must have resources to support more follow up.

One of Robbie's recommendations is that she is very comfortable with online in OEIO because they have a long history. Quality of courses is our greatest threat, based on comments from students. There is not a single person who is fully committed to online, and we are light in instructional design, academic technology and support.

John commented that IT would reassign one of its FTD to online.

Terry asked the group if we support the use of E-Quality. Our structure already fits that level, and we should pursue formally aligning our model here with the E-Quality model. Although this has not specifically been discussed in a Big-Tent environment, it falls under the proposal for improvement of course quality; and best practices align with the four pillars. We agreed it should be part of our recommendation.

We will publish our recommendation, even though we are approaching the summer sessions, because it's still a good time due to the number of online classes being taught over the summer.

There are multiple mentions of quality throughout our report (in the first recommendation, as well as recommendations 35, 36, 40, etc.), so we need to be clear to the Senate on our recommendation.

Spence will try using this new evaluation and suggested e-mailing the faculty to pilot it. Bea is teaching a Quality Matters course and will try it, as well as send it to our group.

Before next Tuesday, Robbie will update her draft with information from today's meeting, as well as e-mails from John and Spence, and get a new version out to the group. Please review it and send any comments to Robbie and the group, prior to our next meeting if possible.

John, Cheryl and Spence agreed to sit down for a couple of hours after next week's meeting, and get the report into final shape.

NEXT MEETING

Thursday, April 21, 2011 – 10:30 – noon in CSS 302

Meeting adjourned at 12:00 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Marilyn Bejma