

Present: Marilyn Bejma, Cheryl Cluchey, Teresa Cook, Elise Gramza, Elaine McCullough, Ron McKean, David Nicol, Larry Schult, Robbie Teahen, Spencer Tower and John Urbanick

Joining us as guests today are Mary Holmes and Don Green.

Call to Order: 8:35 am

John and Mary reviewed the Executive Summary – Future Learning Management System document that had been e-mailed to our group. John asked us to share our comments regarding this pilot and indicate whether or not we support it, as the chosen system will be in use for the next three-to-five years and represent a major financial commitment.

Blackboard 9.1 was piloted this spring (moved up from spring 2012 at the request of the Provost). Research on this product included training for faculty and a follow-up meeting with a Blackboard representative. Monthly “Lessons-Learned” sessions were held in February, March and April; and John feels, in hindsight, that having a Blackboard rep in attendance at these meetings would have been helpful.

John acknowledged appreciation for all of Mary’s efforts, and the pilot was a successful one. Both faculty and students were surveyed at the end of the pilot. For the most part, the surveys showed the product was easy to use. Faculty indicated they would like more time before we change; and students were mostly positive, although showing a drop in agreement for the last questions. The Provost wants our students to be happy with whatever product we use, so their satisfaction is an important part of the evaluation.

Comments/Questions

- Will most of the current problems with Blackboard be gone in 2012?
 - According to Blackboard, yes they will. The schedule shown in the document is just a suggested one, and quite aggressive.
- Is one product a bigger transition effort than the other?
 - A novice user would have to spend more time.
 - Changing over to something new is a certainty.
 - Although Moodle will not be piloted for comparison, migration without a total rebuild is definitely an advantage to going with Blackboard 9.1.
- Will attendance reporting and tracking be addressed?
 - Yes; many features are found through user exploration, and they may prove to be useful for this purpose.
 - The Grade Center is so much better in this version.
- Is the company that gives us Blackboard the same company that gave us FerrisConnect; and if so, how are they to work with?
 - They are responsive to consistent problems, and assigned personnel to address issues.
 - We were not charged for changes to their product.
 - There is a Blackboard product review available if anyone is interested in seeing it.

- Would a hosting from Blackboard free up IT time?
 - We would still need e-learning systems administrators due to client responsibilities.
 - There is usually a review every six months, with charges for storage increase, bandwidth, etc. Business continuity is the biggest advantage.
 - Cost would be approximately \$250,000 more per year to have Blackboard hosting instead of us.
 - Terry reported that Blackboard hosted the system at Davenport; and wait times were long because the university is then in a position of being one of many clients.
 - This issue will be readdressed at a future meeting.
- How would things change with Moodle?
 - Rules and responsibilities would change.
 - Moodle hosting sites do things very similar to Blackboard, and they also provide professional services for open sources.
 - They would perform modifications so that the product has a Ferris State look and feel, then we have to have employees who know how to modify Moodle, and be a different organization than with blackboard.
- Blackboard can do what we want it to do; is there any reason financially or in the implementation of it that would cause us not to support it?
 - There is no additional cost to move to the next version or to use multiples.
 - Migration will be necessary no matter what product we use.
 - The company is not looking at another big change in the next few years.

Robbie felt that the IT group should absolutely weigh in on the issue also.

Spence stated that the concerns and how they were addressed should go out to the faculty, along with the reasons why Moodle won't work. Also, the erroneous perception that we are going with an expensive product rather than with a free one must be addressed immediately when informing the campus-wide community.

Robbie called for a voice vote on whether or not to support the recommendation of FAB, recognizing that it has looked at the technical side of the issue. The recommendation has our unanimous support.

DRAFT REVISIONS OF E-MAT IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Robbie thanked all who gave her editing suggestions before this meeting. She will incorporate those and asked for additional discussion now, as we review the document together.

Student Capabilities and Responsibilities

- Much of the logistics will still have to be worked out.
- If we allow students to take the proficiency test before they enroll, is there any way to authenticate they are indeed the person taking the test?
- We should view the skills test as a tutorial.

- Robbie sees it as a test, and if the student can't pass it, he clicks on tutorials to bring his skills up to speed.
- If we can find a test we like that already exists, we should adapt or adopt it.
- We should introduce it as "You need these skills, and if you go through this tutorial, you will have them."
- Not all teachers will be willing to help students along with this.
- Still do this before registration, but package it so students will see it is to their benefit to take the test and tutorial.
- Add a warning, "Do not assume your professor is going to help you."
- Where is the right place to house this test; where do we place the responsibility of coordination of testing?
- Don felt CPTS is the right place, because it is going to own assessment and have online orientation.
- Can there be some sort of automated way to fill the check box in Banner?
- Let students register without having the tutorial but with an advisory that it is needed by the start of class.
- ITAP has been defunded and, therefore, unavailable for any student who is really having trouble.
- Technical verification of the browser will also be necessary.
- We should include, "It is highly recommended that the student take the tutorial on the computer that will be used during the class in order to confirm connectivity."
- The times that are June 2011 should be changed to September or October 2011.
- CPTS will work on programming resources to meet time commitments.
- Fifteen-minute time allotment should be changed to 5-10 minutes.
- Remove time reference In the Notes column of #9.

Technology Support

- Scott Randle is the e-learning administrator, and he should be able to know that he has continuing employment as long as he is doing a good job. This is a position that runs approximately \$72,500 and is funded out of several accounts transferring money into FerrisConnect.
- Now that we have agreed to support the FAB recommendation, we must support added funding and support.
- Improved communications about technology support in general are needed.
- Insert a bullet about authority: are we going to continue with FerrisConnect Advisory Board as the decision-making unit?
- Possibly have tech apps for courses that require them, such as HVACR having third-party cloud hosting.
- Robbie reported that a policy has passed Academic Senate that any online course must use the official course management system (currently called FerrisConnect) as a portal. Students can apply to the dean of the college for exceptions that must be put into writing.
- Consolidate Technology and Faculty for main bullet points with sub-bullets.

- With regard to #20: We don't have any tracking reports except those from Kathy Fisher. We have to decide what tool to use to track both student and faculty presence and participation in courses. We are not at the stage where we know what reports could be useful managerially to see what is happening in our classes. This may be a faculty decision. This bullet point should be more concise and explain what the tracking is for.
- Collected data should be shared with faculty, compared to all faculty, to give some feel of what they and others are doing. We do not want to be perceived as too intrusive.

Robbie will work on revising the first two sections.

NEXT MEETING

Thursday, May 19, 2011 – 10:30 – noon in CSS 302: We have a 30-minute slot on the agenda of this meeting for a GoToMeeting demonstration that was cancelled earlier this year due to technical difficulties.

Meeting adjourned at 10:37 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Marilyn Bejma