

Attendance: Robbie Teahen, John Urbanick, Rick Van Sant, Leonard Johnson, Elaine McCullough, Bill Knapp, Kristen Salomonson, and Enid Carlson

Absent: Cheryl Cluchey, Ellen Haneline, Dave Nicol,

The meeting came to order at 8:30/a. The minutes of the January 23, 2009 meeting were reviewed and approved as corrected.

The agenda was sent in an email and is incorporated here for the record:

1. FerrisOnline budget revisions and review for March 1, 2009 unit action plan presentation.
2. Reveal the goals we established and adopted earlier. What objectives will we add for 2009-10 plans. How does our budget support these?
3. Review the priority list we brainstormed earlier. Do our plans for 2009-10 address these concerns?

In reviewing last meeting's minutes, the topic of faculty online certification surfaced. In summary the thought of the group was: a) it is a good process and *one* vehicle to grow faculty in becoming reviewers for online curriculum and design, and b) just because a faculty member achieves a particular level of certification or all levels, doesn't mean they will implement those instructional practices within their own practice. Thus, it was concluded that it needs to be considered one of many roads to providing and designing a quality online course.

Elaine asked where is the EMAT with respect to Ferris's mission and the strategic focus of the University.

Robbie provided the following answers to help answer that question. The following represents the thought of some (not all) who have been grappling with online course and program delivery Ferris.

1. *Remove the barriers for students who want to take online courses.* We need to recognize the current barriers that students incur when attempting to take online courses. For example, student orientation and limiting on-campus students from taking online course sections, but not limiting off-campus students are two prevalent barriers. In order to keep growing, and making our on-campus students happy, which increases retention and provides an environment for more to come to Ferris, we need to be able to provide online course sections to all students who want them and not discriminate. In general, it is the full-time students that keep the campus afloat as they support the residence halls, dining, and other services the campus provides. In addition, a full time student generally costs less to support than an off-campus student as they take more credit hours. Therefore, we need to be diligent in removing the barriers for students who want to take online courses.
 - a. With respect to the student online orientation debate, Rick Van Sant observed that in his recent experience his students do not require as much support and hand holding as they have in the past. He surmises this may be due to his students being more computer literate, our faculty are more computer savvy, and TAC has increased its capacity to support the students and faculty. He offered, too, that TAC has been great with adjuncts

who have not received some of the training faculty have received in preparing them to use FerrisConnect in their courses.

- b. John Urbanick added that the technology is better, too, which helps lessen the support burden.
 - c. Kristen Salomonson noted we have a lot of students who want to take online courses. It would be nice to be able to provide that online option to full-time students as there is a real potential for that student to take an additional class, if it's online. Often, they don't take that extra course because it doesn't fit into their schedule.
2. *Remove barriers for faculty in teaching online.* In order to remove barriers for faculty, Ferris needs to provide more support and lots of resources to help faculty to do what they do best and be innovative. Robbie noted we have a lot of good that is happening in the online environment, be it enhanced, blended, or fully online. Ferris is getting great support from TAC, the FCTL, and there has been an increase in investment made in technology and training to prepare faculty and students for the online world.
 3. *Solve the course load challenge.* Ferris needs to provide an equitable model for paying faculty to teach online that supports productivity. The model can be flexible depending upon the program and the instructors involved. Preferably, it isn't one size fits all. There is no current word on where the Senate committee is that is addressing course load. Robbie asked Rick Griffin and Jim Rumpf when they will be bringing forth their recommendation. She has not heard back from either. Robbie mentioned that she offered a solution, which essentially suggested online course loads need to be determined by the department as they are for face-to-face with the consideration that delivery should not make a difference, but content and required pedagogy would be the major factors in influencing course load in either delivery medium. She said her recommendation was not accepted. Therefore, the issue of course load was given to the faculty senate and union to come up with a recommendation. It was noted that this issue is a barrier for faculty in its current state of ambiguity. Until this challenge is solved, it does not create an environment where deans or faculty are too supportive in encouraging, developing or delivering online courses or programs. Several models surfaced in the discussion.
 - a. A pay for performance model where faculty are paid a set amount per student after a section was filled to capacity. In this model, faculty can decide how many extra students they can handle and still keep the integrity of the course.
 - b. Another model was to allow faculty the option of taking extra overloads versus the one they are allowed now by the contract.
 - c. Bill Knapp noted that the course load and barriers to on-campus students taking online courses could be diminished, if not eliminated, if faculty were willing to offer more blended courses. For example, if a course met once a week at a popular time when sections fill immediately (i.e. noon sections) then more sections could be offered at that time because they would not be meeting every day and classroom space could be distributed over several sections. In this scenario, theoretically, course loads would remain the same. Students would be happy and productivity would be achieved and it will be serving the "full-time" student. Robbie concurred that this would be a viable solution as students are asking for more blended courses. Often, it's their first choice.

- d. Kristen Salomonson commented that Ferris is diligently working to stave off declining enrollments with the State declining population and declining economy. Until the online course load issue is solved and is working similarly with terrestrial courses, there will be a problem. Currently, in some cases it takes two faculty to serve the save number of students. This creates a problem with maintaining a healthy equilibrium with the financial equation.
4. Rick Van Sant suggested that we should consider a variety of options in supporting our students. He used an example that contained a combination of online and blended solutions for his graduate students. He was to teach a section of this course in Travers City and Flint. However, they didn't fill in either city. Therefore, he decided to offer it as a blended course to both cohorts. He met in both locations at least once during the semester and facilitated the remainder of the course rest online. He also had a couple of students from the Dowagiac area who needed the course. They, too, were enrolled, but experienced the course completely online. Since most of the students were working well in their cohorts, from his view, there is a lot of solid curricular integrity. He contends FerrisOnline needs to encourage and provide individual flexibility based on student need. We may wish to encourage more blended particularly on-campus and the time slots that are popular.
5. The goal of EMAT and the other committees that are addressing online concerns needs to focus on removing barriers to grow our online programs and online capacity in our niche areas that could be nationally marketed, and possibly internationally. A few have expressed concerns in taking programs nationally. Specifically, some have problems with adjuncts teaching the online courses and programs. Others have concerns with non-resident faculty, or full-time faculty who are not willing to come to campus. Lastly, there are potential faculty contractual issues depending on how the programs are run.

Budget

Robbie mentioned that we *may* have 500K to allocate in the FerrisOnline effort, even though we are currently asking for 2M. With the State's budget and lack of stimulus being understood or realized, the University will have less money to work with this year. In some of the colleges there are carry forward funds, but generally speaking those funds are not available in the colleges that are growing in enrollment. For example, CAS does not have any carry forward money, but COB has some (from a surplus) and CAHS has none. Yet, CAHS is the college that is growing at the fastest rate. Essentially, the money is in the wrong pockets currently for a growth mode. To date, it has not been the practice of one college with a surplus, helping out another college with a lack.

However, Robbie mentioned there are some areas where extra funds may be garnered. For example, there are colleges with faculty positions that are not being searched, and we may be able to siphon some money from those open unfilled budgeted positions. However, almost every college lost open positions and the money "went away." John Urbanick mentioned that when open positions are reviewed, what is kept and or not kept has to be a strategic decision. Sometimes, it is very difficult for institutions of higher education (IHE) to determine how to put strategic value to some effort, position, or expenditure. In IHE investments do not always mean a return on investment as it does in business.

Positions as well as other decisions that affect budget need to be determined as to their strategic fit within the university's mission, vision and goals. A lot of the decisions this year will be addressed with that in mind at the President's Council as that group is in a position to allocate and reallocate resources on a University wide basis.

Robbie said that she, with the support of the EMAT and the input from the Advancing Online Task Force, and FAB, will go forward with the plan EMAT developed at the January 9th retreat recognizing that the entire plan may not be funded. She mentioned our first presentation will be to the dean's on March 3. Each dean is to present their unit action plans. Academic Affairs will present last at the end of the deans' presentations. Robbie will do the online plan, Gretchen and Enid will do grants, and Todd will do the FCTL. One advantage the FCTL has is the Timme Foundation endowment, which has continued to be a source of revenue for the Center. This year, unlike any other year, after the presentations and over dinner, the dean's will discuss how compelling each of their cases are in relation to each other's and in relation to the vision, mission, and goals of Ferris. It will be out of this meeting, the deans will give direction to what the VPAA will take forward to the President's Council. The online effort will have voice as several deans are counting on its growth in their own colleges.

Due to the dire situation of our State economy and not knowing exactly how the stimulus package will affect higher education, Robbie voiced several questions, "What happens if the FerrisOnline budget is not funded? What if we get nothing towards this effort? What will we be able to do and what won't we be able to do? What's the risk of doing nothing? What is our Plan B?"

Essentially, it was agreed that every college would be on their own. For example, colleges would pay for overloads and the adjuncts who taught online for their colleges. In the past, CPTS paid for overloads and adjuncts. This year Academic Affairs will pay for them out of carry forward money. Colleges would not receive any incentive monies for the online courses taught. Colleges would have to make it work by moving funds from existing accounts to alternative ones.

John Urbanick asked if there is not already a lot of funding for online in the colleges, and is what we are budgeting redundant.

Rick Van Sant commented that it appears there is a disincentive to grow online given what has been discussed. He pointed out that, if we wish to grow online, we need to incentivize the system to accomplish the desired growth. If we build our online programs, then it would seem there would be more money to do other growth initiatives.

Robbie Teahen is not a proponent for incentives because they are not sustainable under the current model. She said that Dan Burcham has committed to the colleges that Academic Affairs will pay incentives for this year out of carry forward money. A large portion of the carry forward money has had to be put aside should the State ask for money back. Incentives for this current economic climate and for Ferris to grow, Robbie contends, are for Ferris to offer an education in a way in that students want to buy it. Long term, the incentive for faculty is to keep their jobs and continue to grow and expand professionally.

Robbie Teahen said we have to figure out a way to make a Plan B work, if we don't get any of the money. Right now, it costs about 1M for online course delivery and course development (200K is for course development). Assuming course development goes away (which a lot of faculty are OK with this decision as they believe it is their responsibility as part of their job to create courses), it still will cost minimally 800K to maintain. So there will be **no** growth in online. *We won't be able to grow another student from an external location. Robbie – I thought this would then be run through CPTS if the student is enrolled from an off-campus site???* Please clarify

Sally shared the proposed budget with the President. He asked to know the total expenditure for this year including the cost Ferris is expending with the full-time faculty teaching the online courses. We are not able to get that information until June. Therefore, using last year's numbers to give a rough estimate as to the total cost it takes to run our online courses and programs, the cost was found to be very close to what tuition is bringing in within several thousands of dollars as two-thirds of the online courses and programs are taught by full-time faculty in-load. Therefore, how it appears is that we are spending the money coming in online and the money has already been distributed to the colleges already because online is being taught by FTE in-load.

Elaine McCullough noted that in her department and college, faculty not allowed to teach all online courses. They have to teach at least one course face-to-face. Elaine wondered if there are instances where the online is being paid in-load and if the faculty are teaching face-to-face also with an overload, the face-to-face is counted as overload, essentially reverse to what would be expected.

No one knows the answer to that question. However, Robbie offered the suggestion that one way to solve this problem (if, in fact it is a problem) is to request that the online courses be scheduled as overload, if that option exists (there are some programs that are entirely online and faculty were hired to teach them). Although, this can be a request to the chairs, there is no way to enforce it.

Rick noted that Ferris has faculty who are being paid regardless if they are teaching online or not. There are costs that are being paid from somewhere. Increased demand for funding is predicated by growth. We are going to need more support with people, technology, and services with our online growth. If we don't get money in online learning, then whatever money for online that is one time carry forward is gone. If Ferris wants to remain status quo, then you need at least 800K to 1M in funding, and if Ferris wants growth, it needs to invest 2M. If there is no investment, there will be no services and the effort will deteriorate. The risk is rather than growing competitively with demand, we will shrink and the students will go elsewhere.

Robbie revisited the proposed budget and asked if anyone has a problem with change of a 4% incentive of the gross revenues to go to Cheryl and Kathy for their services. This is down from the original budget suggestion of 10%, but it will cover their salaries, benefits with some left over. In the current proposed version of this budget, the only faculty or staff getting an incentive is Cheryl and Kathy as they currently provide service to 66% of the online students.

The budget discussion was tabled for the next meeting. The meeting adjourned at 10:15/a. The next meeting is Friday, February 20, 2009 at 8:30/a in CSS302.