

Present: Cheryl Cluchey, Dave Nicol, Ellen Haneline, Rick Van Sant, Robbie Teahen, Enid Carlson, John Urbanick, Elaine McCullough

Absent: Leonard Johnson, Kristen Salomonson, Bill Knapp, Stacy Anderson

Webpage review: Cheryl shared several websites she had a student identify and review. She asked the student to provide his opinion on what he thought was important to online students and then relate it to the websites he identified as quality online websites. Of the websites he identified, the group reviewed: University of Pittsburgh's -PittOnline, Penn State University's- World Campus, and Weber State University-WeberOnline. Several of the websites reviewed had a "get started" button or area, which the student found very helpful. The group agreed to use the Penn State's WorldCampus as the benchmark for Ferris's online website. It was the cleanest and easiest to follow. It also provided some of the key features students like to see in addition to courses, career services, admissions, financial aid, etc. It was noted the Eduventures survey that is being run for Ferris includes a question regarding what students think should be included on the Ferriswebsite. Robbie suggested that in the short term we simplify the current website, add more color, maybe a picture or two, create a FAQ, and have access to career services and financial aid. There was a comment about the "online learners" on the Ferris homepage that it should be more prominent. Given the design of the homepage, the prominence of the "online learners" won't change. However, the group agreed it should be changed from "online learners" to just "online" or possibly "FerrisOnline" down the road provided that term is acceptable to the community. Cheryl said that Jennifer will be working on the online website some this summer and is planning on revamping it this fall. Therefore, it is important we communicate to her what we want, how we want it, etc. She has traditionally worked closely with UA&M with respect to her web design and pages. There is no reason to think she won't be working with them again closely so the pages align with University marketing practice. Cheryl will review with Jen the desired changes.

John asked if there were any best practices in web design for this purpose. If there are, he suggested we use them and we make sure that we include UA&M in the changes. Robbie mentioned that Jennifer and Ted were invited to this meeting and neither were not able to attend.

There was some discussion on whether or not EMAT should recommend to the University that the online effort should be distinguished with its own branding, for example, FerrisOnline. It was noted there are some within the University who believe it should not be distinguished from Ferris. However, it was noted this is a frequent practice for Universities to distinguish their online efforts as noted with Penn State World Campus, PittOnline, UCFOnline, etc. It was questioned how the FerrisConnect brand came into being. Apparently, there was a fairly small group that came up and agreed upon the name of FerrisConnect. Robbie said that she would develop a proposal for only the name to be changed to FerrisOnline. She will include in the proposal the positives and negatives of why the institution would want to distinguish its online effort. She will pass it by the Deans' Council and President first and then work with UA&M for consistency and possibly a logo.

Reporting and Tracking: Several different tracking efforts were discussed. Robbie said she is working with Institutional Research to look at the trends of online course drops by day 4. It was suggested that

this data be compared to the face-to-face as there is presently an assumption that the drop rate is more than face-to-face courses. Rick Van Sant said there could be numerous reasons why students drop by day four. However, where there is a problem with an instructor or course design/work those drops generally happen later. He suggested it may be good to look at trends at the last day when the student can withdraw. Robbie also said she is working with Mary Holmes to get login reports within the first few days of an online course. This information will be useful for Cheryl, Enid, and Kathy to hopefully circumvent possible drops and help those students who may have a tendency to lag a bit behind to get more plugged in earlier.

Capacity Issues

Another concern are the bottlenecks in online general education courses. Currently, the RN to BSN program has turned away seven students because they couldn't get their general education credits at Ferris. Yet, they are still continuing to admit students within their College. Encouraging students to get gen ed credits from another institution is not a solution because students may forfeit their financial aid. Students have to take at least six credits in order to qualify for financial aid. Nursing students in the past were able to receive a fair amount of assistance from their employers, but this is no longer the case. The bottlenecks appear to be in the Humanities courses, specifically history and religion. Ellen warned that if this situation is not remedied soon, Ferris will lose their market share in this particular program. Community colleges are trying to get authorization to offer these types of programs, which exacerbates the need for Ferris to come up with a solution quickly. However, adding more online sections in these courses creates a dilemma for CAS because they have face-to-face sections that are not filled. CAS wants the students to fill the face-to-face courses first. This is obviously not feasible for the online students. Cheryl acknowledged there are some on-campus students filling seats in the fall online sections, but they were only placed there after the window of time for online students to register for these courses passed. Questions arose to inquire if Nursing students would be willing to take alternative gen ed courses if they still fulfilled specific gen ed requirements. Ellen said this solution would work. She indicated that the Nursing students didn't care what course they had to take, other than it would be helpful if they had at least some interest in the subject matter, as long as it fulfilled the requirement. However, the question remains, what are those courses and will CAS make those sections available online for the fall.

Robbie requested from Cheryl the specific number of people who are waiting for online courses this fall shy the duplicates and the online wait list for the fall 2009.

The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, August 13, 2009 at 8:30-10:00 in CSS302.

Respectfully submitted,

Enid Carlson