

Present: Stacey Anderson, Enid Carlson, Sue Cherry(guest), Cheryl Cluchey, Ellen Haneline, Leonard Johnson, Bill Knapp, Dave Nicol, Rick Van Sant, Robbie Teahen, John Urbanick, ,

Absent: Kristen Salomonson, Elaine McCullough

What are the numbers for online learning? What happened this fall? Update on calls?

Sue Cherry, Manager of TAC and ITAP, was our guest for this meeting. She came at the request of Robbie who wanted her to share the TAC FerrisConnect activity at the beginning of this fall semester. Sue said calls were down 40% from the previous year. TAC received 425 calls on the first day of class instead of 750-800 they had the previous year. Of the calls received from 8/23 to 9/3 only 85 were directly related to FerrisConnect. Currently, there are 3K-4K unique students in online courses. Several students were denied access to FerrisConnect due to a Banner “flow over” problem or due to faculty inadvertently forgetting to include all their students when they issued access to their courses. If instructors forget to “select all” in the gradebook to allow access, it is not uncommon for students at the end of the list to be missed in getting access to the course. In the iConnect program, 1.15k students were connected this fall by Student Technology Services (STS). STS made sure to fix the problem of having multiple Java versions on those computers they connected. They also provided instructions for students to eliminate multiple versions of Java where the student connected their own computer to the network. Sue estimated that Mary and Scott may have about 30-40 FerrisConnect problems that were not listed in her report, i.e. the actual number of FerrisConnect calls this fall was approximately 125 calls.

Sue reported that her group is working to identify groups that need the most support. ITAP is increasing in capacity with more students participating and funding coming from Academic Affairs/Online. Matt Engles will be the ITAP student to support CPTS GR and Kendall. All his classes are in Grand Rapids. ITAP is listed on the TAC website, so it can be easily found and referenced. Bill and Sue are discussing the possibility of having ITAP students doing “tours of duty” through the FCTL. If this plan transpires, they will have all the ITAP students go through weekly ITLA’s (instructional technology learning assistance) twice a week. ITLA’s are the FCTL’s informal walk-in sessions that run at noon and 5/p for faculty to learn new instructional technologies. According to Bill, they are usually very well attended. Sue also reported that the ITAP students are doing some intermediate Office training with a customized legal focus for the McKessy House staff. They will be developing customized hand-outs for this training that focuses on the features the legal staff use in the Office products. Sue also said TAC/ITAP will offer training labs over the year for those interested. Finally, she reported that her group assisted with the block training and new faculty orientation, etc.

John reported that over 13K students are enrolled in FerrisConnect in enhanced, blended, or in fully online. He also said the number of sections is very high compared to previous years.

Ellen also reported there were proportionally fewer problems with FerrisConnect this fall. CAHS experienced a few Banner “flow over” problems as well with faculty forgetting to capture all of their students when giving access to their courses. But, for the most part fall start up with FerrisConnect went smoothly. CAHS called approximately 1K off-campus students. She cited one instance where she had a faculty member, Susan Fogarty, who drove to Holland to ensure the nursing students got connected and acclimatized to the course. Ellen said this made a big difference. She believes the calls and the faculty being diligent in working with their students at the start of the semester contributed significantly to CAHS having very few problems and not losing students. Ellen reported that they had more problems with on-campus students.

Robbie cited a comparative report on withdrawal rates. Generally speaking, there appears to be a 10%-20% or higher rate of students dropping online courses versus on-campus courses. She said that the University needs to figure ways to retain students in online classes and decrease the drop rate. Currently, there are no demographics to understand the students who are withdrawing. The courses that drop most frequently are in History and English. Robbie said she does not see the same trends in CAHS or COB, and surmises that maybe they get dropped because they are general education courses and not the students' core courses. However, the problem is quite serious as in some courses 1/3 of students drop the course. It was suggested that possibly we need to look at the faculty member too, not just the students. Another suggestion was to get a report at the course level to make a valid comparison, along with student demographics.

Bill Knapp reported training 60 faculty at beginning of school year, which included faculty who have to teach in FerrisConnect should there be an illness and new faculty. He said that the FCTL has been busy, but not horrible this fall with respect to faculty questions and support.

Robbie said that there was approximately a 31-32% increase in SCH online this fall from last year. She also reported that all the growth the University experienced this fall is from online. On-campus is down 1600 SCH, versus the SCH increase of 2300 in online. In addition, students enrolled in fully online programs is substantially up from last year. This growth is probably in the MBA and Allied Health programs. In addition, the percentage of off-campus students in fully online courses is 68%. The trend continues to shift from on-campus to online.

Stacey also said that FLITE was not being asked as many questions compared to what we they have experienced during the fall start up in previous years. Cheryl said CPTS also did not experience as many questions this fall. One can surmise that with fewer questions, we are getting better and our students are more prepared. Rick said when he worked with Kendall's art education students he used to have 5-10 students remain after class asking for more help. There may be one, now.

Rick reported that face-to-face enrollments are down in the graduate education program. They had to drop RES 661-662 due to low enrollment. Where do the students go when we drop courses they need... elsewhere? The question was asked if we made more sections available earlier would Ferris experience less loss? Cheryl said that more online offerings were made available at the last minute and they filled quickly.

Cheryl said that this fall term she emailed all online faculty except CAHS asking them if they would like to have their students called who didn't log in in the first few days. She garnered a list from IT of all those students who hadn't logged in within the first couple of days. She eliminated 700 CAHS students which left about 600 students to be called. But, when they called they found out that many of students already had logged into their courses, so they abandoned the list citing its inaccuracy. Cheryl then emailed faculty to find out the students who hadn't logged into their courses. However, Cheryl said that the students who were successful with their logins and called were grateful for the calls. For those students who hadn't been able to successfully log into their courses, they referred them to TAC to have their problems fixed. Cheryl said after this experience, ideally, it would be best if faculty would either send them the list of the students who fail to login in the first couple of days or have faculty call their students. If CPTS can determine the students who are going to drop prior to the fourth day, CPTS can fill those places with the wait students. There are obviously some Banner/FerrisConnect problems, as there were instances where a few students dropped a course in June and were still on the FerrisConnect class list, but not in Banner. It is apparent, that there needs to be better reporting of student enrollment and, if there is a problem in FerrisConnect in updating class lists, that needs to be rectified also.

Robbie spoke with Mary about the need for this information and its accuracy. She asked if Blackboard had a script to get the information we need. The assumption that underlies the need for the login information and calling is that the students we lose at the beginning of the term are the ones who had problems at the start. If we can identify those students and connect with them to fix their problems, we may be able to arrest some of the withdrawals.

Cheryl reported on the Sloan-C Leadership Institute she attended recently in Pennsylvania. She said most of the participants were online faculty, instructional designers, and not many support/operational people like herself. She said it was a very valuable. Her take away points were:

- It's best to have faculty teach a course in the face-to-face and online environments to really get a good comparison as to how well the course is meeting outcomes in both environments on a per instructor basis.
- Don't market programs that are not ready to be delivered or when the institution is not able to handle properly. Presently, Ferris doesn't market any of its online programs. Cheryl said that the University really needs to reconsider giving incentives to the colleges if it wants to grow your online programs and get faculty on board.
 - Note: FSU took a grass roots perspective to grow online programs and courses. It allowed it to grow and the culture changed over time. The online growth and demand has caused a big change in faculty over the last eight years. Incentives for course development along with incentive pay backs to colleges were helpful in online development .
- Do the research to learn if there is a market for a course or program.
- The people the organization needs to support in going to distance learning conferences are the faculty who aren't already teaching online.
- There are a lot of people who are doing online for profit.
- Do not force faculty to teach online if they don't want to teach online.
- Don't decentralize the instructional designers. The institution has a better chance in maintaining quality and consistency in online course design and delivery by not decentralizing the instructional designers.
- An institution needs to make sure their instructional designers get a lot of professional development so they can be aware and stay on top of the best practices in design, delivery, and pedagogy.
- A course is a course – not the delivery –it's the outcomes.
- **Response time** – there is no consensus on this topic other than faculty need to come to an agreement with a standard for the institution. Let the faculty own that as a group. It was suggested that we ask Elaine to talk to her OTC group and see what they think about an appropriate response time. Students' expectations are critical to satisfaction. Students need to know what the response time is. If they don't, they are generally not happy and can place some unrealistic expectations on the instructor.
- It's important to talk to the students at the beginning of a course to help set reasonable expectations. In CAHS they attempt to get the students who are familiar with the online environment to help those who are new. They have found this strategy to be very successful with students helping students.
- Every school essentially has a different financial model for handling and supporting their online learning effort. Some universities charge a fee/SCH and divvy up the money among their

departments. Others get a percentage of online credit tuition. What was evident to Cheryl was that revenue sharing sustains and potentially grows the online effort in the schools represented at the Sloan-C Leadership Institute.

- Note: Each college is having a short fall this year. Academic Affairs will attempt to make the colleges whole. Fritz's goal is to move money out to colleges and provide more money to operate and work within their budgets. Academic Affairs will attempt to make them adequate but not sufficient. If there is money left over from this effort, then Academic Affairs would like to revisit providing incentives to the colleges for their online course offerings.

Cheryl reported there is an online portion that is part of the Sloan-C Leadership Institute. It starts on September 14. There are five topics and each participant is to choose one topic and come to a conclusion. In addition, they are to take a topic from their university. Cheryl would like to get some ideas from the group as to what she would research and study. It would be helpful to know where Ferris is headed with its online effort. What is the University's desire to grow online? If you think the future is going to have a larger proportion online, then it's not necessary to spend millions on buildings and student recreation centers. Another option would be to reduce the extension services and closing those offices and focus those resources online. Discussion followed. Some see the extension offices as feeders to the University. Others recognize that some students take online not out of preference, but because they have no other alternative due to their circumstances.

Reports: At present we do not have any demographics to understand the reasons why students take online courses or drop out of them. We don't have any spring or summer data with respect to online student or faculty demographics. However, it is known that summer online courses were almost exclusively taught by full-time faculty versus in the spring it is anticipated that it was less full-time faculty and more adjuncts.

Robbie mentioned that Eduventures is doing a student/customer survey. As of this date, approximately 500 responses have been submitted. The survey focuses on determining what kinds of services are needed to support students to be successful in the online environment.

Robbie also reported that we have an official online budget. All of Cheryl's and Kathy LeClaire's salary are covered in this budget. In the attempt to be conservative the budget was built to handle the outstanding contracts for online instruction, but there is a concern we will have more growth this fiscal year than our budget can comfortably support. Robbie met with Kathy Fisher to get semester online reports automated. Cheryl is having all the secretaries work with the faculty who have been paid so we can figure the fall salary with benefits. Salary information can be gathered from HR data. Summer expenses are all paid centrally and not through Academic Affairs. This fall will be the first time the online budget will be tested to see if it is adequate. Typically fall is half the whole for the academic year (excluding summer).

SAI: Ferris needs to decide how to get a higher return in SAI's from online students. Some schools create holds on student accounts. Some faculty don't let students get their last assignment until they fill out the survey. Whatever the incentive (a carrot or stick), Ferris needs to find a way to have students complete SAI's online with a good return in addition to having an instrument that provides credible data.

The policy proposal to require faculty who want to teach an online course use FerrisConnect has passed through General Counsel and is on its way to the Chairs' Council for approval.

Online Website: The online website was reviewed. It's more attractive and easier to navigate. But, due to the inconsistency of the online course offerings, students complain they can't plan. It was suggested that maybe we need to publicize when a course is offered fully online, and be consistent in the frequency it is offered and how it is offered.

The purpose of the website is to market the major resources and components that comprise the online effort. It was suggested that there needs to be more information on the programs for Ferris students and other students who may want to take its courses. Currently, it is not wise to market to students who are not Ferris students because of the limited resources in offerings and support. The group identified the following areas of the website that require some attention –

- A category of needed blended categories – proportionality needs to be addressed – visual experience.
- Testimonials from faculty – video clips
- FLITE Services
- Testimonials from students – video clips