Distance Education Committee

Meeting Minutes for September 7, 2018 via OM 304 and WebEx

Present Attendees: Aura Lippincott, Marcy May, Cathy Vanaria, Divya Sharma, Scott Volpe, Colleen Cox, Leslie Lindenauer, Stephanie Kuhn, Tom Schmiedel, Becky Diot

Absent: William Joel, Dean David Martin, Monica Sousa, Brian Kennison

Secretary: Becky Diot

Meeting called to order at 9:03am by 2017-18 Chair Aura Lippincott

AGENDA

1. Approval of last meeting minutes for May 4, 2018 – deferred to next meeting
2. Election of Chair for 2018-2019 term – unanimous vote for Aura Lippincott, and accepted

Old Business:

1. Follow up on last year’s work:
   a. Enterprise Survey Pilot – Aura gave a recap of the summer pilot project. Overall, pilot went well and waiting to receive feedback from survey sent to pilot instructors to assist in making a decision to move forward with the tool. Final report will be sent to leadership for discussion about next steps, if any.
   b. WCSU web clean-up for online information - Aura went through catalog of pages on website for anything to do with online education at Western and will share the consolidated findings in upcoming meeting for further discussions.
   c. Peer evaluation of online courses – pilot - No work over the summer. Stephanie will bring this up during her meeting with the DEC Chair during her review, and believes the Committee’s work will be a great benefit to the process time.

2. Online and hybrid definitions – Aura reported that when the definition of hybrid changed, the Math department had an issue when they wanted to do an exam on campus for an online course. These cases were defined as hybrid previously but with the new definitions, a hybrid course cannot exceed 50% online. It is not completely clear that an online course must be 100% online, however this is the understanding of some. Suggested that definitions of course types may need more granularity which would need to go through governance.
   a. Stephanie asked about the process and how it is displayed/defined in the course catalog. Aura explained that the meeting dates would need to be decided upfront.
   b. Aura mentioned secure online exam solutions as a possible alternative to on-campus exams. ExamSoft was being reviewed by Nursing for use in campus labs, but no decision was made - software offers other add-ons like a proctor piece, which is of interest to Nursing. Might have to push this topic to New Business.

3. Other old business:
   a. Online office hours research and infographic have been posted on the CELT website.
   b. The Distance Committee previously suggested that online faculty receive an email each semester with useful links regarding online instruction. This email went out on the official first day of the semester. Information about best practices rubric (OSCQR),
New Business:

1. Priorities for 2018-2019 Discussion
2. Vote on at the October meeting
   a. Online Office Hours Part II
      • The committee could pursue the issue of online office hours as a percentage of contractual faculty office hours. Faculty who teach online could do some portion of office hours based on a formula.
      • The Provost and Union should be consulted before embarking on this.
      • Marcy suggested clarifying what online office hours are (synchronous online interactions via video). By clarifying, can perhaps make the argument that this increases faculty availability, rather than decreases.
      • There is some interested amongst faculty in pursuing this topic.
   b. Online/Hybrid Definitions Part II
      • Clarify whether online courses can have campus exams (with advances notice at registration) or whether the current definitions need more granularity to accommodate this use case.
   c. Training for faculty
      • Colleen brought up topic of training concerns and who is responsible, especially with new products/initiatives being rolled out (Office 365, Windows 10, Home drive migration, etc.), in addition to Blackboard. Wasn’t sure if IT had plans for training.
      • Becky informed everyone that she no longer does training in her current role and was told by the interim CIO that IT is short-staffed and have no one to train. It is a problem in general, and until we can hire more staff, we need to refer users to tutorials, when possible.
      • Aura has created a Blackboard “Cheat Sheet” and is available to train faculty but this may not be sustainable/scalable if demand grows.
      • Need to explore vendor training, classroom training, training documents/tutorials, in addition to 1-1 training.
      • Stephanie feels it may be a benefit if those that teach online can assist in some way.
      • Faculty survey – online readiness and understanding. Divya suggested sending a survey targeting faculty teaching online/hybrid asking what they would like to see to help determine needs. There may be misperception amongst faculty who haven’t taught online/hybrid about what is involved, too much too learn. A survey may help clear up misperceptions.
   d. University commitment to LMS – requirements of an LMS
      • Leslie feels there needs to be a discussion regarding the university’s commitment in regards to an LMS and percentage of current faculty using it.
      • Should a syllabus - at least be in every Bb course?
• Is this outside the scope of the Distance Committee? Should online courses have a “minimum” LMS usage?
• Other universities have this requirement (preliminary syllabus) so that students can “shop” for courses during registration. Would it be beneficial if Western had that capability somewhere – within LMS, or Banner, etc.?
• Concerns raised about how the syllabi would get loaded. Concern that it will fall back on the Chair to upload the content and it just won’t happen, especially when all faculty do not use Bb and some don’t even how to use the computer properly. Everyone has a full workload and you get to the point where you just can’t do it.
• Discussion about whether constraints like these should inform whether the Distance Ed committee takes up issues or whether the committee should do regardless, and make strong recommendations to University Senate/Leadership, who ultimately decide.
  e. Email Aura and/or group with any new ideas
    • Should the scope of the DEC be revised to include hybrid/blended? Digitally enhanced? (Aura)

3. System LMS Survey project
   a. Aura attended the BOR survey group meeting. The group seeks information from faculty to see what they are looking for in an LMS, if there is a need for an LMS, or seek an alternative LMS. Some members may want to broaden the scope to include education technology. She will report back to committee with updates and make an announcement at a Senate meeting.
   b. Scott was asked about the Bb LMS project’s timeline. He believes the licensing deal goes through the Fall of 2022 and need a decision by Fall of 2021. We will need a year of transition, if there is a change in LMS. The survey should go out in January, and the process would require months of evaluating/testing alternate LMS and will take some time. There are no plans for moving to Ultra at this time.

4. New member has a scheduling conflict with the meeting time. Aura will send out a doodle poll to see if there is a common alternate time to meet.

Meeting adjourned at 9:59am

Minutes submitted by Becky Diot