Distance Learning Steering Committee

Minutes of the Meeting

1/16/2004

Members Present: Mike Russell, Kathy Kral, Elizabeth Bennett, Carol Goodson, Mary O’Neill, Michael Crafton, Matthew Clay, Brian McCrary, Melanie Clay, Christy Talley, and Stacey Rowland

This meeting was called to order at 10:30 AM in the Carriage House

1. Melanie presented an overall analysis of the Summer 2003 student course evaluation summaries to the DL Steering Committee members for discussion of distance program improvements and actions as needed.
   a. Problem: Shorter summer sessions provide challenge for many courses. A great number of students complain that the online workload was too great. Suggestion: Include this issue in discussion-based training session for faculty.
   b. Problem: In some courses, students reported frustration with groupwork. Suggestion: Address in training. Bennett stated that this is true in a face-to-face class as well but there are more ways to facilitate in an online environment. There are many theories on group arrangements.
   c. Problem: For summer, there seems to be a greater number of students who are not familiar with WebCT. Why is this? Bennett stated that in the COE, many students start in the summer. Suggestion(s): Have more orientation sessions in the summer. Not only for Summer Semester but also for all Semesters, need knowledgeable staff available to answer the DL helpline for the first two weeks of the semester during the evening hours from 5:00 PM – 7:00 PM.

2. Melanie reminded committee meeting of upcoming DLA2004 conference in May 23-26, at Jekyll Island Club Hotel, and asked Brian McCrary if he could attend and work with IT Support Group. She also stated that this year the committee has actually had to turn away proposals because of the amount of proposals submitted.

3. Melanie addressed the ongoing and recent issues of migrating to VISTA, Fall 2004. Melanie stated that the BOR has mandated that we use VISTA and host on centralized server by Fall 2004. One of many issues is that no faculty were involved in this decision and there is a great concern of lack of performance and having to depend on the centralized office to handle the problems.
   a. Problem(s): Vista is currently experiencing major performance issues, which includes major system slowdowns and server access. This is greatly impacting our current 300 eCore students. Many students are considering dropping their eCore course(s). Mr. Russell has already sent an e-mailed correspondence to Dr. Hynes expressing our collective dismay of the situation that stresses our biggest concern of our entire WebCT Vista operation being housed on the University System of Georgia server next Fall. The System’s office is asking everyone to consider that they are adding more hardware that should alleviate the problem before considering moving back to the campus edition of WebCT. Kathy brought up another major issue--the lack of integration of campus pipeline with VISTA. Suggestion: (1) Stacey is the Interim eCore Advisor while Janet is on maternity leave. Stacey is to draft a letter ASAP to send out to all UWG eCore students. She will need to consult with Dr.Crafton and Mr. Russell for suggestions on what to say in the letter. (2) Should we keep on our own server this Fall 2004? The DE Steering Committee made a unanimous decision that if performance issues are not quickly resolved and the Board of Regents doesn’t find a way to integrate our Pipeline with Vista, then we will need to stay on our own server. Mr. Russell will notify the BOR of the committee’s decision.
   
4. Melanie announced that the DDEC will begin offering “Dr. D” house calls to faculty who need assistance with distance learning in February 2004.
5. Melanie announced that the DDEC is to begin a new Amazing Online Teacher program and explained the criteria.

a. Dr. Crafton proposed that we change to academic year instead of fiscal year. Melanie agreed to the change.

6. Dr. Bennett stated that Dr. McKenzie would like to have another program for recognizing faculty. Suggestions including having students nominate faculty, and a committee which would include faculty would make the decision. The DDEC would provide trophies, and small honorariums. Melanie said that she would develop some ideas and send them to Barbara.