Distance Learning Steering Committee
Minutes of the Meeting
February 14, 2006


The meeting was called to order at 9:00 AM in the Carriage House.

Summary of Decision Items

1. We will request to be able to test WebCT CE 6.0, which uses the same database as Vista.
2. We will continue to monitor issues with Vista and statewide server performance before planning to migrate.
3. The committee recommended that the VPAA provide leadership and directive in determining which full programs should go online.

Discussion

1. The USG Support License for WebCT CE will end this year; UWG must migrate to a Vista 3 centralized server along with all other USG schools, to be completed by the end of this academic year. The only other option would be to pay an extra $50,000 to buy our own CE license for one year. The DE department, under advisement from the BOR, suggests that UWG go ahead and migrate by colleges, beginning with Summer's June term.
   a. Melanie Clay suggested that perhaps A&S should migrate last because they are the largest and have the most diverse needs, with Nursing being a possible exception.
   b. Janet Gubbins explained that she will be talking with the Deans and Department heads to get their feedback on this question of who will migrate when.
   c. Barbara McKenzie said that her department would rather go ahead and get it over with this summer; that her faculty would rather redo their courses during the summer when they have more time versus over the short winter break.
   d. Janet Gubbins explained that if the MIT department wants to go in the summer, then all COE depts need to be in agreement; that the support units can't be expected to know by individual department who is on what server - that it needs to be a college-wide decision. Also, it would be better for the students if we migrate by colleges rather than so many students having to go to two different servers and figure out on which server which course is located.
   e. Janet Gubbins also explained that migrating to Vista means having to basically rebuild each course; and that the process of combining courses will not be as easy as in the past - that course sections will have to be cross-listed by the Registrar. We have no process for this currently. Vista's Template system is only advantageous if the bulk of the course is ready/built before the term begins; one cannot 'build as they go' and have changes propogate down.

2. Janet Gubbins explained that Vista 3 currently does not integrate with the myUWG portal; users will have to login a second time.
   a. Barbara McKenzie said that her department advises students not to go through the myUWG portal due to time-out issues. Kathy Kral explained how this issue is resolved.

3. Barbara McKenzie asked how the migration will impact the current COE and DE Dept Faculty mentor programs; we are training them on CE and now they must learn a whole new system. Melanie said that the DE Dept will do their best to work with faculty as best as they can, including individual sessions and weekly training sessions beginning as soon as possible.
4. Diane Williamson explained that many COB faculty are gone during the summer and therefore she did not feel comfortable with their college migrating in the Summer.
   a. Melanie Clay suggested that the COE use Vista in the Summer, per the feedback from Barbara McKenzie and Diane Williamson, the COB use Vista in the Fall, and A&S in Spring 2007. Melanie also conceded that if there is a department absolutely adamant about not migrating during their allotted time, that the DE dept would agree to concede.

5. Sunil Hazari asked for a preview of Vista 3. Janet Gubbins demonstrated how one can package entire content modules from WebCT CE and move them to WebCT Vista 3. Janet also explained some new tools available that may help with the migration process, including Course Genie. Janet demonstrated various tools in the new interface, as well as discussed possible implications for Templates. The group thought that the interface was not too different than the CE version.

4. The group discussed how they did not like it that the BOR allowed us no other options except to use Vista 3 on their central server.
   a. Melanie Clay asked if we should try again to test Moodle. Dan Saurino pointed out that we had already invested so much time and money in training faculty; and that the students are used to WebCT at this point. Diane Williamson questioned how the centralization will impact support. Kathy Kral and Janet Gubbins explained how back end support will be impacted but that end-user/ front-end support should not. Janet also explained how the centralized system will also mean that our users can use the BOR-provided 24/7 end-user support and how USG back-end database support has much improved via an emergency beeper system.

5. Brian McCrary asked about the H.323/ GSAMS video-conferencing replacement. Kathy Kral explained that it was still up in the air, between Bell South and the BOR.

6. Melanie mentioned that the DLA 2006 conference is coming up in June; and that those on the DLA tech team would meet again soon. She also suggested that the DL Steering Committee try and meet again in a couple of months.

7. The meeting was adjourned at 10:30am.