

Minutes

Kansas State University Faculty Senate Committee on Technology Meeting

February 18, 2003 - 3:30 p.m. - Room 205, K-State Union

Present: Chang, Crow, Fritz, Haddock, Havenstein, Montelone, Murray, Simmonds

Visitors: Jennifer Bambach and Scott Finkeldei of DCE

Bambach and Finkeldei gave a presentation on the online academic advising system that DCE Information Systems has developed in conjunction with the Learning Anytime, Anywhere Partnership (LAAP) Project directed at KSU by Mel Chastain of the Educational Communications Center. Bambach showed a CD with an introduction to the project by Mel Chastain. This can be viewed at the URL <http://www.dce.ksu.edu/advise/advisedemo.ram>

Chastain explained that LAAP is a project funded by the U.S. Dept. of Education to provide online student services for distance learners. This component of the project was a partnership with other educational institutions, a corporate partner, and the Western Cooperative for Educational Telecommunications that focused on building a tool to facilitate academic advising for both resident and distance students. Academic advising was chosen because of its central role in the academic enterprise, and because although differences were found to exist in the way advising is done between disciplines and departments, there were no real differences found between advising needs of resident and distance students. The project thus focused on the similarities of the advising process between institutions, disciplines, and departments. A small group of KSU advisors was asked to describe the components of the advising process; this was converted into UML by the DCE programmers. The underlying programming needed to be able to access and integrate data from seventeen different databases at KSU. The K-State Online suite of tools was selected as the interface for the online advising system because it is a secure network, is familiar to many students and advisors, and provides communication with instructors and advisors for both resident and distance students. A goal of the project was to create a tool that would be able to handle 80% of advising questions. The Online Academic Advising system is currently in beta-testing with a number of advisors, including lead advisors in the College of Arts & Sciences.

Bambach demonstrated various features of K-State Online that the Online Academic Advising System makes use of: 1) Modules--which could be Word or Excel document templates that the student could use to begin to prepare their semester schedules; 2) Calendar--with information on deadlines, available dates for advising appointments, etc.; 3) File Upload--which would allow students to prepare and upload preliminary schedules for the advisor to review; 4) Assessment Suite--for such uses as keeping track of components in student files, self-assessment of student study skills, etc.; and 5) Message Boards--for asynchronous communication with groups of advisees. A novel feature is the Advising Report, a printable and formatable document that contains all the information of a DARS report plus the overall GPA, GPA in the major, course requirements still to be met, etc., in a compact and user-friendly format. Both students and advisors have access to the Advising Report, and students can print it out for use as a completely unofficial version of the information in a transcript (for example, it does not say KSU on it anywhere). The intended primary use of the Advising Report is to make it easier for both students and advisors to know where the student stands relative to graduation requirements.

Bambach and Finkeldei reported that the beta-test version of the Online Academic Advising System has been well-received to date by students and advisors. Future plans include working through problems identified by beta-testing, working on ways to keep the source databases current, continued support for and extension of its capabilities. They mentioned that the upcoming integration of KATS and K-State Online with the eID and eventually the Portal will help in making this system run more smoothly. It was pointed out that while there is upfront time by the advisor in developing a customized advising space, there could be time saving realized later by being able to create batches of advising reports at once, etc.

Bambach stated that if faculty members or advisors are interested in becoming part of the pilot group testing the Online Academic Advising System, they should contact Mel Chastain.

Following the presentation by Bambach and Finkeldei, there was some general discussion of other issues by the committee:

- Havenstein asked if there had been any progress on selection of the second domain name (k-state.edu vs. kstate.edu). No one had information on this.
- Montelone reported that the Portal Prototype would be demonstrated to IRMC on February 20, and that Jane Rowlett wanted to arrange a demonstration to FSCOT at a future date.
- It was decided that FSCOT would not meet in March, since our scheduled meeting falls during Spring Break and many committee members were planning to be out of town.
- Simmonds reported that he is a member of the Security SWAT team, which is charged with making sure that all KSU servers have a common standard of security and is looking into the degree of email security that would be most desirable. This topic is particularly pertinent given the recent breach of security of graduate student information at KU. Montelone will look into having a report from this group for the April meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 2:45.