

FSCOT minutes, 11/19/02

Present: Crow, Fritz, Haddock, Keithley, Montelone, Murray, Ross, Simmonds, Warren

Guests: Mike Crow, Jane Rowlett, Lloyd Walker, John O'Hara, Seth Bridge

## 1. Portal Project

Jane Rowlett, Chair, University Portal Development Task Force, and Lloyd Walker, Project Manager, Data Information and Administration gave an update on the status of the University Portal Project, paraphrased below. The Portal Development Task Force is a broadly constituted group that includes members with technical expertise as well as representatives of other constituencies. It will oversee portal development and implementation and then be charged with oversight following implementation.

The Portal Project was put on hold when the Integrated Information Initiative (III) took a large budget reduction; however, a fortuitous turn of events has made it possible to move quickly forward with a Portal Prototype Project, which will be led by Lloyd Walker. A consultant from Oracle is available to work with the prototype project team for four weeks in November, December, and January. We already own Oracle software that was purchased for the LASER project; this will form the basis for the portal prototype. The server for the portal has been ordered and should arrive in early December. The plan is to develop the prototype and to bring it online with a few applications for demonstration purposes. These applications will probably include a link to KATS, some functions of K-State Online, Encompass (part of the Digital Library), and possibly an Extension document search function. This prototype will then be demonstrated and "marketed" across campus to raise awareness of the capabilities and utility of a portal for the University. User feedback will be solicited by mechanisms that have not yet been determined; these reviews will be used formatively to guide further development of the portal.

It is hoped that the portal prototype will provide a tool set and development environment that will facilitate full implementation and encourage colleges and departments to create portlets that can be included in the portal. It should help to identify the hardware, computing capacity, and personnel training needs that will be required for full implementation. CNS is chronically short on personnel, but individuals who have been involved with the Digital Library, LASER, and KEAS will be switched over to working on the portal prototype project. All three of these projects will eventually build into the portal project.

Tweed Ross emphasized the importance of a university portal for us to survive and thrive as a leading land-grant institution and his concerns that lacking a constituency, following prototype development, that the project will be dropped for lack of resources and disappear. The role of FSCOT, Faculty Senate, and other groups to which the prototype will be demonstrated, in promoting it, was discussed. Jane Rowlett pointed out that a portal can play a pivotal role in research activities as well as its obvious advantages in convenience and marketing.

Progress of the portal prototype project will be available on its project page at the URL <http://www.ksu.edu/infotech/projects>

To view another university portal, check out Arizona State's. Jane Rowlett warns, though, that since we do not have user access to it, it is difficult to distinguish the portal from the web site. The URL is <http://www.asu.edu>

## 2. Online transcripts

In attendance were Mike Crow, Assistant Registrar for Technology, John O'Hara, Student Senate Chair, and Seth Bridge, Chair of Academic Affairs and University Relations Committee. O'Hara and Bridge have been pursuing the issue of online transcript availability and Crow was designated as the representative from the Registrar's Office to discuss the issue. Students would like to see at least unofficial transcripts made available to them online to print off for free, rather than having to walk to the Registrar's Office and pay \$5 to receive an official copy with a University seal with the imprint "Issued to Student". They feel that the charge is just another privilege fee for them. Crow made the point that the Registrar's Office is opposed to the concept of unofficial transcripts because they are relatively easy to alter and the charge and responsibility of the Registrar is to provide accurate academic records. It is possible that K-State would be liable if fraud was proved in a case of someone altering his or her academic record on an unofficial transcript.

Currently DARS reports are available online and can be printed out for no charge, but these are an unwieldy format and do not perform the same function as a transcript, even though they contain the same information.

Crow stated that another issue involved in making a transcript available online is FERPA (the Family Educational Rights and

Privacy Act). See <http://www.ed.gov/offices/OM/fpco/ferpa/index.html>

A signature is needed to release a student's academic records; electronic signature technology is not yet available. Once the student information system is converted from the current legacy system to an Oracle database, online transcript ordering and credit card payment may be possible, but the signature issue remains.

Crow explained that the transcript fee is used to subsidize the entire Registrar's operation, in personnel and hardware costs in keeping grade records, printing transcripts, etc., and that in the current budget climate, that fee is probably not going away anytime soon.

O'Hara and Bridge agreed to explore in more detail the question of just how many Big 12 universities actually have online transcripts and exactly what these look like--are they just a slimmed-down version of DARS or do they indeed serve the function that students would want. We may take up the issue again at the next FSCOT meeting if they request it.

## 3. Other business

Montelone brought up a report forwarded by Haddock dealing with a new law impacting distance education and copyright issues. It was decided by the committee to try to find someone who could clarify the matter for us. A website: <http://www.ala.org/washoff/teach.html> is dedicated to information on the new law.

Simmonds raised the issue of connectivity (or lack thereof) between the Manhattan and Salina campuses. Some of the newer rooms being used for high-profile University events lack videoconferencing capability (Fiedler Hall and the Hemisphere Room are two). Simmonds stated that what was needed was a portable communications unit that could be moved to such venues.

The next FSCOT meeting is December 17. We will inquire about an update on KEAS (Simmonds reported that from some of the many other committees he serves on that a mid-December informational effort is planned) and on the Portal Prototype Project.