

Minutes¹
Faculty Senate Committee on Technology
November 2, 2004--Bluemont 16e

Call to Order:

Chair Ross called order at 2:30 p.m.

Approval of Minutes:

There being no changes to the minutes of October 5, 2004, they stood as approved.

Attendance:

Committee Members: Rintoul (for Bloomquist), Michaels, Holcombe, Ross, Selfridge, Simmonds (via video conference), Willbrandt

Special Guests:

- Beth Unger, VPAST
- Jane Rowlett, Director, Academic Services, Portal Project
- Rebecca Gould, Director, iTAC
- Tom Herald, Faculty Senate President-Elect

Announcements

Dave Rintoul asked if FSCOT would be receiving the draft policy on data stewardship, recently approved by IRMC and forwarded to CITAC and the Dean's Council. It appears that this document was sent to CITAC and to the Faculty Senate President, and should eventually trickle down to FSCOT. If not, a copy of the policy, obtained by Rintoul as a member of CITAC, was copied and will be distributed to members.

Old Business:

Discussion ensued over the draft of a resolution urging the administration to commit more effort and resources to the University Portal project. Most of the discussion concerned the amount of money needed to complete this project (unknown at this time), and the wording of the resolution. Many changes in the wording were suggested, and Ross will circulate a new draft before the next FSCOT meeting. At that time we will vote on it and forward it to President Spears for inclusion on an upcoming Senate agenda.

Committee member Beth Turtle had prepared a report on the use of wireless devices in classrooms, and the potential for abuse of these devices in academic dishonesty cases. Since she was not present due to illness to discuss the report, discussion was relatively brief. It is apparent that technological solutions to this potential problem will be difficult, expensive, and ultimately doomed to failure as the devices continue to evolve. A

¹ With many thanks to Dave Rintoul for his taking the initiative as the primary author of November's minutes.

university policy on use of these devices in test-taking situations may be desirable, but also would suffer from the fact that it will be difficult to keep up with technology as it develops, and thus specific wording might be difficult to draft. Rintoul suggested development of suggested statements (to be included on tests) that could be posted on the Honor System and Provost's web pages, similar to the Honor Code boilerplate text that is suggested for inclusion in course syllabi. That wording could be as simple as "Please turn off and stow all electronic devices; keep them off and stowed until you have left the exam room." which is currently included on exams for BIOLOGY 198. Changes in the specific wording would be needed in situations where some electronic devices (e.g. calculators) were needed for the test. But the focus of the responsibility to refrain from academic dishonesty needs to lie with the students, and faculty responsibilities will include ensuring that students know the policy. It might also be possible to develop more specific information to be included on the Honor System web site, giving examples of uses of electronic devices that would violate the Honor Code. In general it was agreed that neither technological intervention nor policy drafting would be as effective as simply developing statements that can be included on tests and syllabi, and alerting faculty to the possibilities for abuse of these devices.

New Business

Gould reported that as more technology classrooms were created around the university, chalkboards would be replaced with whiteboards, since chalk dust is very destructive to computer hardware. She indicated that this might make some professors unhappy, since they apparently prefer chalkboards. Rintoul said that he suspected that faculty would be satisfied with whiteboards if they could be erased efficiently; most of the time you cannot write on one of these since the previous day/week/month's information can still be seen on the board. Gould indicated that this was an issue with custodial services; they are unable to keep up with adequately erasing all the boards on campus. It was suggested that supplies (including erasers, but also including the solvents needed to completely clean these surfaces) be made readily available in these rooms, so that individual professors could deal with the problem in the event that custodians had not done so.

VPAST Unger reported that there was some interest (source of the interest seemed to be within the IT units) in developing ePortfolios for use by students (and faculty). Some software for this sort of portfolio has been developed (both by private companies and by universities); it should be possible to find a useful software application to use in pilot programs. Selfridge asked if these were similar to the CD-based resumes that current Architecture students prepare, and, if so, why did we need additional software. Unger responded that they would include that sort of material, but also things like transcripts, etc. The purpose is for students and faculty members to use these for evaluation; indeed they could be developed for use in (or substitution for) annual reports submitted by faculty. Unger asked for FSCOT assistance in developing this initiative. She admitted that it was an unfunded mandate, and that it was possible that development of ePortfolios might suck funding away from other projects (like the Portal). Enthusiasm was minimal on the part of FSCOT members when this was divulged. Rintoul suggested that departments which currently use portfolios (e.g., Architecture, Art, English), or which are

developing portfolios as part of their assessment plans (e.g. Women's Studies) could be approached and asked to participate in a pilot project. Current software applications could be tested in these environments. This might take minimal resources, but could allow us to figure out if ePortfolios had a place in the university's future IT environment.

Ross said that he had been asked to get information on the current status of the proposal to allow faculty to submit grades online. Unger responded that this had been tabled for a while, but was now back in motion, and was a priority for Provost Nellis. There are several options still being discussed. These include: incorporation of this feature in the Oracle-based SIS system coming online in the next year or so; incorporation of the feature into the next iteration of K-State Online (KSOL), or development of a new system. For various reasons the KSOL option was preferred (despite the fact that 60 or so instructors in the College of Education use Blackboard rather than K-State Online). She indicated that this would not be difficult to accomplish, but that it would not be initiated until after the rollout of the first iteration of the University Portal in March 2005. It is envisioned that the traditional method for submission of grades on paper forms would be maintained, since some faculty members do not/will not use KSOL. The long-term future of the paper forms cannot be predicted; it is possible that the convenience of online grade submission will make this an unattractive option in the near future. The possibility for errors in entry of grades could be increased or decreased (opinions varied) with an online system. Rintoul suggested online forms for grade changes as well, in case the error rate increased.

FSCOT, at the request of IRMC, discussed desirability of policy to prohibit use of non-secure electronic transmission (e.g. regular email) to send grade information. Since it cannot be ensured that an email correspondent requesting a grade is indeed the student who got the grade, VPAST Unger, following a suggestion from the head of the History department (who could not attend our meeting today), recommended a complete ban on the use of email to send grade information. Since the KSOL system is a secure website, grades could be posted there and the student could view them there. Gould asked about situations where other individuals, not affiliated with the university (e.g. internship preceptors) needed grade information quickly. These individuals cannot access KSOL, but do have valid reasons to need to see a specific grade or grades. It was admitted that this presented a problem, and that there might be other (currently unanticipated) situations where similar problems could arise. Other technological fixes were suggested (e.g. secure drop-boxes, access to certain regions of KSOL for non-university-affiliated personnel). It remains to be seen if these fixes would solve all the problems that would ensue if a complete ban on email transmission of grades was adopted. More later.

Future FSCOT Topics:

Authorization to University Digital Data and Systems Policy
Standards for online classes and instructors.

Respectfully submitted
/s/Tweed W. Ross, Chair