DISTANCE EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Adopted Minutes

January 30, 2012

Room 101
2:30 p.m. – 4:30 p.m.

Chair Dale Crandall-Bear called the meeting to order at 2:38 p.m.

Roll: Dale Crandall-Bear, Chair; Karen Cook; George Daugavietis; Marylou Fracisco; Mary Gumlia; Jeffrey Lamb; Roy Pike; Connie Adams
Guests: Les Hubbard, Ruth Fuller
Absent/excused: Ferdinanda Florence; Scott Ota; Sandra Rotenberg; Robin Sytsma

Mary requested adding to the agenda a discussion of meeting days and locations in order to consider what is most equitable depending on the Committee make-up. Jeff pointed out that travel to the centers could incur mileage expense since most members are on the main campus. The topic can be reviewed in the future as membership changes.

1. **Approval of past minutes**
Deferred

2. LMS Platform Selection - Update & timeline
Dale gave an update on the LMS process: Companies brought presentations to the College; faculty had opportunity to work with sandboxes; the RFP was created in November and sent out in December; a balanced selection committee was formed, and; criteria was established, a 23-page scoring sheet was created to consider platform content (how it works, ease of use), IT/ support (including interface with BANNER), and cost, using a 2:1:1 ratio on those three areas. The Committee members were Arturo Reyes, Jeff Lamb, Sandy Rotenberg, Dale Crandall-Bear, Barbara Fountain, Ruth Fuller, Leslie Hubbard, Rich Augustus, Jim Ennis, Justin Howell, Peter Cammish, and Thomas Watkins. Laura Scott attended to answer fiscal questions. The RFPs were quite detailed as were responses. Much time was spent over the holiday break reading and ranking. Members met in January, individually chose three rankings, compiled the rankings, and concluded the clear first choice was CANVAS, followed by Desire2Learn and Etudes. IT was very thorough and helpful with extensive comments and analysis. Based on their serious reservations about integration with BANNER and technical limits, Etudes was eliminated along with Moodle, Blackboard and eCollege. The LMS Selection Committee agreed to forward a strong recommendation for Canvas with Desire2Learn in second place.

IT support is a main concern. The 24/7 first tier support supplied by eCollege isn't provided by the other systems, so the College would have to augment staff to provide that first tier support. Administration needs to understand that very clearly and instructors will need to know this is a whole different support system. Students would call the College IT staff who would attempt to resolve issues. If unable to do so, IT staff would contact Canvas support. Canvas recommended two full-time staff at Solano, Desire2Learn would be comparable and the College would have to make the decision to hire more staff. Jeff called Cypress College in Arizona, New Mexico State, and Utah State. They had each transferred from another system to Canvas and all reported that help calls decreased dramatically

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with Canvas because the interface is more student friendly and integration was excellent. First tier College support might close the help door to a handful of students between 2-6 am. Concern about weekend support came into question as well. If the integration is more seamless, less support would be needed. Classes are created in BANNER and the LMS, they can be entered through either, and changes can be accomplished concurrently. The LMS would be fully integrated with BANNER so there would not be need for duplication. Karen noted the tech staff hours should be staggered depending on when more calls come in which would include the beginning of a semester as well as different times of day. They would also need to know what the workload and timeline would be like. Jeff added that it would be helpful to review the eCollege data which shows the kinds of calls that have been made. Ruth opined the collection of data that would come in through the College first tier would give us better availability of dealing with problems here and more connection with the students than the off-site service. Jeff responded that the services staff would provide need to be identified. Hiring a full-time IT person would allow the Coordinator, as a trained professional, to accomplish the task of serving faculty rather than the current demand of providing a lot of tech work. Roy noted the importance of securing very good tech support or other problems will arise. Ruth clarified that there was never a second in Committee meetings that anyone let up on support, but it will be up to the district to decide. Jeff explained that Etudes was the cheapest system, the Canvas base cost is $190,000, and an extra $30,000 for Canvas premium support was added. Canvas is great at taking and applying current technologies and user habits and they provide a video and printed "how-to" series. Because they are open source, there are a lot of community based forums available as well, including 24/7 online stealth help. The College would provide tier 1 staff and decide on staff hours for answering phone and email to resolve issues. As a next step, if needed, staff would contact Canvas tier 2 or 3, with a promised 8-hour maximum response time and 24/7 phone support for our staff, covered by three support admin and a manager. Jeff pointed out the key is awareness of what kind of help our students are looking for and reiterated that current information can be found in eCollege. The Canvas system offers more self-help and is much more intuitive as it makes sense upon presentation without much direction needed.

Roy observed that the decision seems to be made and since this is a kind of unknown realm, it is important that we work together, push for support and be sure it is addressed. Change creates stress initially, so there is a need to look forward, take it slowly and methodically and work with it like the old online committee that basically invented as we proceeded, while working together with cooperation and enthusiasm. Jeff added that that is a good function of this Committee, which should be the online instruction voice, through the Academic Senate. He noted that the goal was to include everyone, all were invited, but only about eight instructors attended the presentations. Marylou stated the members never saw or discussed the survey that went out and felt it has been a done deal, and as the rep of her division, she didn't, nor did the Committee, have any real input. Ruth replied that the district made a decision to get out of eCollege and, if we aren't working together, they will let the support slip. The faculty voice needs to be strong now to insure support. Dale added that the Committee had to move fast, put information out, and did what they could. Les pointed out that there are things we have to do to be ready by August. Dale requested the Committee play a constructive and positive role and not let go of the issue of support. Sandy and Dale worked on this through last semester, forwarded links to allow all instructors experience the sandboxes, set up two presentations with each LMS so that everyone interested could find opportunity to participate.

Desire2Learn support was ranked slightly higher by IT, but was left in second place because it would be best for self-hosting, which is a much more elaborate process and wouldn't be feasible now, but could be put in a proposal as a later option. Dale gave a timeline: briefing here today; at the Academic Senate next week; then on to FaBPAC, and; the Governing Board by February 15th. Roy noted that his constituency has already been figuring out how to download from eCjollege to be prepared. He has heard faculty concerns of what else is going to happen, property rights issues, resistance to change, and some faculty in large divisions felt left out of being able to teach online. Information needs to be flowing or else rumors will. Jeff replied that DE has a place to make recommendations on how courses get scheduled, but it is an administrative purview. Humanities created guidelines for new course creation and how to make more collegiate decisions. We have to figure how to cycle courses for interested faculty

and look at the growth issue to convert what we have to online format.   Dale plans to get regular updates to the Committee on the timeline and what decisions are made. As soon as the Governing Board makes a decision, transition will begin and workshops and training will be scheduled. Jeff recommended members inform their constituents that the content of their courses belongs to them, as confirmed by the different systems. He pointed out that the transition should not cause a decrease in the number of online offerings in the fall.

It is not clear yet if there will be compensation for the work to be done by instructors to transfer their courses. Karen suggested at least eliminating required flex and use that time for part of the transition work. Marylou stated that support must be approved at same time. Summer online courses (and faculty income) are cancelled and we have to spend free time creating new courses. Dale stated that he will keep support a top priority. Ruth added the Academic Senate should put forward a comment or resolution. Roy has been checking into offering, and instructors have expressed interest in teaching, an array of international online studies at Solano and the U.S. Forest Service would love to have us add online courses that could possibly go nationwide. The college that can offer those platforms first will be chosen. We can't really meet with the U.S. Forest Service until the LMS decision is finalized which adds another urgency to get the whole thing going. Dale reminded members that anyone can get a course set up right now with a Canvas shell. Karen pointed out the current workload in her division including SLOs, curriculum review, program review, 3-year plan, leaves only about 10% of her time to give to class work, and again suggested eliminating remaining flex this semester.

Les opined that since this is all new and a lot could happen, we need to come up with some hard standards on what these classes would be in appearance and quality. Ruth responded that Accreditation is mandating that now. Jeff added it speaks to that regular contact that all DE courses are to have. Look at some of the guidelines and envision some baseline components to the courses that would lead to that content. We're all over the place in terms of what people consider contact with students, posting announcements isn't really contact and there are many more ways to interact with students, maybe some new ways within this platform. Marylou noted that eCollege was about having common interface and our decision to have only one system to work with. Dale plans to take the DE Resolution from last year back to the Senate for approval once the LMS decision is made.   Jeff opined online evaluation should be different than face-to-face, agreed with Les that the form comes up short, and posed the question where to send an instructor for help for whom he has concerns.   Dale would like to see the Committee look back into the role to speak to best practices and realign those positions and, as Coordinator, he really wants to work with faculty. Les stated that, while some people abuse online, in reality it can be much more work than face-to-face. Jeff added that sometimes student comments on evaluations aren't as good for some of the more involved and interacting because they also require more work.   Also, the class shells weren't getting looked at but Jeff has been reviewing them in faculty evaluations and prefers to help faculty get it right.

Karen queried if a new hire for tech would already be experienced in Canvas.   Jeff replied that after the initial push to solicit support staff, a second conversation will be needed to look seriously at what our needs are, including hiring someone experienced with functional interfacing and integrating with different systems and browsers. Utah University reported the majority of support issues with Blackboard were browser related, but not so with Canvas.

3. Summer DE classes

Jeff reported that the eCollege contract ends in July and LMS transition would occur during the middle of summer session. Looking to make reductions in tight budget times, eliminating summer DE classes seems the most logical way to move forward. Setting up all the training and shells by summer would be too much and DE faculty could choose to offer their courses face-to-face.   Karen responded that people in online programs aren't going to come for onsite classes. Marylou expressed concern about getting into something without most of the bugs worked out since CANVAS is so new.   Karen suggested that a pilot group of tech savvy DE faculty teach online over the summer and then help the rest of the DE faculty. Ruth agreed and added there are course prerequisites that have to be taught in

preparation for English I.   Jeff will take the question to the deans' meeting. Other members agreed that 5-10 pilot classes would help iron out bugs in the new program which could be a medium approach. Jeff replied that online classes weren't going to be offered but GE transfer courses and workforce development courses could be brought onsite. He added that EVP Reyes is looking at savings that have been on the backs of our courses and at some point there are no more cuts to make.   Reductions can't keep coming from our sections with many areas down to the bare bones. Marylou added that we are cutting our customer base. Jeff agreed but pointed out that we're only paid by the cap they set for us and anymore above that is costing us and has been for years. Jeff has heard different scenarios for the summer question.   Jeff and Ruth explained that creating changes in CANVAS can be done simultaneously in all of your courses and will not entail the duplicated work that eCollege requires.

College funds of $48,500 are currently committed above the system costs. Included are costs for winter and summer break coordinator work, a student worker, and minimal IT admissions and records work.   Additional funding is needed for LMS administrative and tech support. The plan is to have transfer training March through June and Canvas training would begin with fall shell. Instructors need to begin work on their course transfers this semester and ask questions which will help everyone get through the transfer. It is preferable for instructors to transfer their courses from eCollege to Canvas to get it to look how they want. Records in eCollege can be downloaded to excel and onto BANNER. Students can question grades back four years so it would be best to save at least four years. Jeff will look into what is available from eCollege, which is a proprietary system, and he will check into a start time, costs, compensation etc. and forward information as he receives it.

4. DE Coordinator and DE Committee Chair positions
Dale requested the Committee decide on whether to elect a new DE Chair, a temporary Chair for the semester, or have him remain, which he is willing to do. Marylou pointed out it is part of the DE Coordinator job description in the 2006 DE white paper. Roy opined that there is greater continuity when the Coordinator also serves as the Committee Chair and he would like to see Dale continue as Chair. The Committee agreed.

5. Other Items

To Marylou's query if the Committee has bylaws, Jeff responded it is covered by the 2006 white paper. (Faculty Working Group on Distance Education at Solano College)

Meeting adjourned at 4:12 p.m.