

Online Self-Study Executive Committee Meeting  
March 24, 2006 2:00 p.m.

Present:

Dr. Neil Snider, Executive Committee, Chair  
Dr. Vicki Spruiell, Student Support Committee, Chair  
Dr. Patricia Beatty, Curriculum and Instruction Committee, Chair  
Dr. Thomas Ratkovich, Family Support Committee, Chair  
Dr. Bob Ware, Institutional Context and Commitment Committee, Chair  
Dr. Doug Wymer, Evaluation and Assessment Committee, Standing in for Dr. Martha Hocutt  
Mrs. Patricia Pratt, Resource Person, Guest

Approval of Agenda

- I. Dr. Snider started the meeting by introducing the committee members and listing their respective assigned committees. He then asked if everyone had a copy of the agenda. This met an affirmative response from the committee members. He asked if there was anything that anyone needed to add to the agenda. There was not. He asked if there was a motion to approve the agenda. Dr. Ware made a motion to approve the agenda, which passed unanimously.

Approval Minutes

- II. Dr. Snider asked if everyone had a copy of the minutes from the February 24, 2006 Executive Committee meeting. This met with an affirmative answer. Dr. Snider asked the committee if there were any additions that needed to be added to the minutes. Dr. Ratkovich stated that he read the minutes and found that his name was spelled wrong. He gave the correct spelling for his first name. Dr. Ratkovich also stated that he did not ask the questions that were attributed to him in the minutes. Dr. Ware acknowledged that he was the person who asked these questions. Dr. Snider apologized for the discrepancies and told the committee of the difficulties he encountered in trying to get the minutes corrected. Dr. Snider asked if there were other corrections to be made. Dr. Snider said the corrections were noted. Dr. Beatty made a motion to approve the minutes with the corrections, which passed unanimously.

Committee Reports

- III. Dr. Snider expressed his appreciation for the progress that the individual committees are making. He asked the committee to be sure to get a copy of their minutes to Mrs. Pratt, so she can get them on the home page. He then turned the floor over to Dr. Ware.

### **Institutional Context and Commitment Committee**

Before Dr. Ware gave his report, he confirmed with Mrs. Pratt that she has received a copy of his committee's minutes. This was affirmed. Dr. Ware reported that his committee met on March 1, 2006 for an organizational meeting to explain to the group what their task was and what they had to get done in a few months.

The assignments were given. He explained that they basically looked at the items they had been assigned. The members of the committee had expertise in different areas. Beth Springer is the accounting person, so she was given some of the budgetary type questions. Frank Whidden was given the information technology type questions. The group made a decision to make assignments based on each member's area of expertise.

The committee met again the week of March 21<sup>st</sup> to do some troubleshooting. Dr. Ware asked the committee, in those intervening couple of weeks, to go out and identify the documents that they would need to answer the questions and/or resource people and come back to the meeting and let the group know if they were having problems finding sources for the information. Everyone came back to the meeting and reported that they found documents and resource people to answer their questions. They did not have rough drafts of their answers to the questions yet. They are meeting again April 12<sup>th</sup>. At that point, everyone is supposed to have a rough draft of their answers to the individual items so the committee can start discussing whether we are in compliance, in partial compliance, or not compliant. They had a brief discussion on the technology side of things, which is Whidden's part of the committee. Off the top of his head, he knew some of the answers. In reference to the three items that the committee is dealing with that had to do with how well our technology platform is planned for and is meeting the needs of the program, we are in pretty good shape because there is a process for choosing that technology. We have a technology committee. There is an oversight for the platform. It is upgraded continuously. There is a lot of help for the faculty and students in terms of using that technology. In that area, we are off to good start in terms of perhaps saying that we are doing a good job in complying with standards. Dr. Ware said he will have more information at the next Executive Committee meeting.

Dr. Snider said that it was a good report and asked if anyone had any questions. Dr. Beatty commented that at some point we all seem often to be overlapping with our assignments. To some extent, at least in one the sections of her committee's assignment had to do with Blackboard.com, so she spent a good amount of time talking to Mr. Wesley Mosley. She said that much of what she discussed with Mr. Mosley is also what Dr. Ware discussed in his report. Dr. Spuriell stated that Dr. Wilkins informed her that some of the questions she asked him had been asked previously by Dr. Beatty. The committee admitted that questions were overlapping. They agreed that this is

a positive aspect because they can get the information from different directions.

Dr. Beatty stated that they can get together as a committee and sort through the answers. Dr. Snider informed the committee that the Editorial Committee would be responsible for that because when the last self-study was conducted the questions overlapped. The steering committee got bogged down when they tried to do sort through the overlapping questions. Dr. Richard Holland was the chair of the steering committee at that time. He decided to leave that to the Editorial Committee. That committee can decide to emphasize the information in one place and just mention in another place wherever it is appropriate. Mrs. Pratt explained that NCATE is done the same way when it comes to questions overlapping. Dr. Ware said that one question came up concerning documentation. Since this is an in house project, were we to reference a specific document that exists or are we to have a room that physically houses the information like we do for the larger self-study. Dr. Snider said that would not be required.

Dr. Snider explained that this is a dry run. The vault or room housing the documents will have to be established in the year 2012. We are doing this now for two reasons. One is to have a head start on the official self-study that comes up in 2012. The other reason we are doing this now is to identify any kinks or any weaknesses that we might find so at the very least we can report to other accrediting agencies like NCATE that we are looking at this program. It is going to be an ongoing project. He said that this committee will continue to work on suggestions and do follow-ups. As for what we are doing now, we will list what is documented but not have a room.

### **Curriculum and Instruction Committee**

Dr. Snider next turned the floor over to Dr. Beatty. Dr. Beatty reported that her committee has met twice. Her committee did basically the same thing as Dr. Ware's committee. They simply divided up the different parts of their work. The members went out to see what they could get done. They came back on Tuesday. Two people presented written reports. Dr. Beatty said she is going to do a dry run during the break with the information everyone brought.

Dr. Louis Smith had information and it was written up in a rough draft. Mitzi Green sent out a letter to various people. Most have asked for a little more time to compile the data she has requested. This information is the meat of her committee's assignment because it asks for the faculty member's qualifications. Dr. Beatty went on to say that she and Sheletha Ross took a big portion of the assignment which dealt with consortia and contracts, which went from library activities all the way to Blackboard. She said we found out that we have no consortia or consortium. We have a couple of contracts that we can get copied.

Dr. Beatty informed the committee that the last part of her group's assignment has yet to be addressed because she has been unable to contact the student member of the committee. Dr. Beatty will have a report on the importance of appropriate interaction between instructor and students as it applies to the online program.

Dr. Beatty reported the technology platform does work; although, according to Mosley, we do not work on it all the time. At regular intervals, there is some upgrading or updating of the materials. Basically, there are backups in case something goes wrong. The server is reasonably new in part because of the online program, so there is justification for having this online program. Dr. Beatty concluded her report.

Dr. Snider took the floor, but before turning it over he reported that Dr. Beatty's committee has questions that overlap with Dr. Spuriell. These are the questions that pertain to the Library. He said when Mary Pagliero called and gave him the questions that she needed information for, he called the key people on his staff and they came together to make sure that they were in compliance. They used the Library's policy manual, and this will serve as documentation. Dr. Beatty raised the question of library contracts because that is something her committee is looking for. Dr. Snider confirmed that there are several contracts that the Library deals with. Dr. Snider informed Dr. Beatty that the databases we get are through the Network of Alabama Academic Libraries (NAAL) which is a consortium that allows the Library to use databases that we would not normally have access to.

### **Faculty Support Committee**

Dr. Snider turned the floor over to the Dr. Ratkovich, chair of the Faculty Support Committee. Dr. Ratkovich reported his committee met on March 9<sup>th</sup> and March 16<sup>th</sup>. At the first meeting, they did basically the same thing the other committees did by taking the questions and dividing them up among the members. Everyone then went to their respective contact people and gathered as much information as they could. When they met on March 16<sup>th</sup>, they brought the information together. He feels that they are making progress. Most of the questions have been answered to some degree. They are still waiting for the results of the survey. Once they have received that information they will meet and go over it to see if we are in compliance or not.

### **Evaluation and Assessment Committee**

Dr. Snider thanked him for his report. He then turned the floor over to Dr. Wymer who is filling in for Dr. Hocutt, chair of the Evaluation and Assessment Committee. Dr. Wymer reported that his committee met on March 15<sup>th</sup> and divided the questions that the committee was assigned. They are scheduled to meet again on April 12<sup>th</sup>. He hopes to have rough drafts, but they are answering questions about assessments that they are in the middle of

doing. These assessment tools did not exist until now. The first meeting was more of a discussion about how to go about reporting on the assessment and evaluation of the program when the method for doing that has not been fully developed as of yet.

Dr Spruiell asked the question do we evaluate online students. Dr. Snider informed the group that we do. Members of the group said they had not been evaluated by the students. Mrs. Pratt said if the professor had a class of less than five students they would not be evaluated because the statistics would not be of any value with such a small group. Mrs. Pratt stated that one of the committees needs to take a closer look at the course evaluation because we have been using the same one since we started. She feels some of the questions need tweaking so that they are more in depth. They need to be more structured to cover what we really need to know. Dr. Wymer believes that his committee would be the one to look at this more closely. The group discussed some possible questions that may need to be incorporated.

### **Student Support Committee**

Dr. Snider turned the floor over to Dr. Spruiell, chair of the Student Support Committee. Dr. Spruiell reported that her committee met March 14<sup>th</sup> and did the same thing that the other committees had done. Their student representative emailed her after to let her know that he has been deployed to Iraq. With Dr. Snider's help, she was able to replace him with Alvin Nelson who is a tremendous committee member because he has worked in Dr. Wilkins' office since he was a first semester freshman here. He had lots of information and suggestions that he wanted to share with her about what we can do to improve this program.

They met again that morning, March 24<sup>th</sup>. Everyone has done a fine job of getting information. There was a suggestion that the UWA webpage be updated to reflect the year 2006. Mark Davis cited all the websites where he found their answers. His report led the committee into the discussion of online faculty going through the same orientation as residential faculty because one thing that she is hearing from Dr. Wilkins' office is that they cannot man the phones. Students are getting upset because they call and everybody in the office is on the phone, so they do not get an answer. The problem is that the caller may be a student in Iraq and someone is asking can I call you back.

Mark put together all this information that could serve as a directory. This would enable the students to get in touch with key contact people. They would not be limited to one or two contacts that may or may not be available.

Dr. Ware stated that there is no general orientation for online faculty other than what they may get in their specific disciplines. Dr. Snider told the committee that the Library has online help guides that will help the students

get into the services the Library offers, but we really do need this information compiled for the students.

We do not have tutoring for the online students. Dr. Wilkins said there is a checklist that the students receive every semester to continually keep them on track as to what they have and what they need for graduation. There was a question of whether we could have the online students buy their textbooks in an electronic format because with our situation now if a student enrolls late into a ten weeks and orders his books through the traditional bookstore process of shipping it out he may not get it until he is three weeks into the course. Another question is, are we as an institution with the numbers as they have grown putting the necessary resources back into the administration of the program. Are we giving the various departments the personnel and resources needed to maintain the level of students we now we have.

The committee members discussed various problems students are having getting their books ordered in time for the classes. There is a question as to when the syllabi are available. Dr. Beatty talked about the five days where the students can view their syllabus in advance of the class start date. Dr. Ware said that some of the financial aid problems have been solved so students can get funding to purchase books in a timely fashion. The committee discussed the possibility that the Online Bookstore homepage may need to be evaluated because it really is not user friendly. Dr. Spuriell reported that there is an eight hour turnaround for tech support. This is an issue that needs to be addressed to find out if this is acceptable.

Mrs. Pratt said there is no reason why we cannot develop a survey for each committee to address questions that only the students can answer. This way we will have documentation to support our findings.

#### Additional Areas of Inquiry

- IV. Dr. Snider took the floor. He informed the committee that there were additional areas of inquiry that Dr. Taylor wants the committees to look into. Dr. Snider listed the committees he thought would likely cover the different areas of inquiry.

##### (1) Look at the Higher Education Re-affirmation Act

- A. What is the status of the Act?
- B. What impact will it have on distance learning?

One impact is the validation of the person at the other end of the line. One way that this can be done is the new software/hardware Troy University is using. The software/hardware validates the person by fingerprint and a small camera that allows the professor

to monitor the test. **Mrs. Pratt said the software is not expensive.**

**Resource Person: Dr. Sallie Johnson, Troy University.**

- C. How do we meet the standard of validation? **It is the responsibility of all the committees but primarily Evaluation and Assessment Committee.**
  
2. Check on CHEA and find out what CHEA is doing in the area of distance education and how it might impact on UWA. **This will be the responsibility of all committees.**
  
3. Look at the Sloan Consortium, which has done much work in online learning and can supplement the best practices SACS has outlined. How do we stand in relation to the Sloan Consortium findings and recommendations? **This will be the responsibility of all committees.**
  
4. Look at what programs we should be launching over the next five years at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. **This will be the responsibility of the Curriculum and Instruction Committee.**
  
5. Look at how our program is being marketed. What exactly is CSU's marketing strategy for the program? **This will be the responsibility of Institutional Context and Commitment Committee.**

**Do not contact CSU. See Dr. Wilkins.**

6. We have had difficulty with the reciprocity agreement with the State of Texas. Students have to come to Alabama and take Praxis II and get certified in Alabama. They then have to apply in Texas. The Alabama State Department of Education is working with the Texas Education Agency on this matter. What is the status? **This will be the responsibility of the Curriculum and Instruction Committee.**

**Resource person: Mrs. Nancy Taylor**

7. Financial Aid

Has Congress removed the controversial restriction on enrollment in distance learning? **This will be the responsibility of the Student Support Committee.**

**Resource person: Don Rainer.**

8. How do we staff our program in light of quality control and in light of external demands, such as NCATE? What model of staffing do we want to develop? Should we consider fulltime non-tenure track professor teaching only online, hybrid appointments teaching part time residential and part time online, etc.? **This will be the responsibility of the Faculty Support Committee.**

**Resource people: Dr. DeVaney, Dr. Smith, and Dr. Taylor.**

9. Administrative structure.

What adjustments need to be made, if any, to the administrative structure of the online program as the program continues to grow? **This will be the responsibility of the Administrative Context.**

**Resource people: Dr. DeVaney and Dr. Taylor.**