

Online Self-Study
Institutional Context and Commitment Committee
March 21, 2006, 2:00 pm, Wallace Hall 408

Present:

Dr. Robert Ware, Ms. Cheu Mita, Ms. Beth Springer, Mr. Frank Whidden, and Mrs. Amy Dial.

Welcome:

As Chair of the committee Dr. Ware welcomed everyone and thanked them for attending. Dr. Ware also asked for approval of our minutes from the last meeting and they were approved with two revisions. Dr. Ware announced that Mr. Egbert was unable to come due to a prior meeting. Mr. Egbert did want the committee to know that he was working with Dr. Wilkins and that he would have his report to us on our next meeting.

Overview and Objectives of the Committee:

Dr. Ware reviewed the purpose of our committee that we are to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the Online Program. Dr. Ware pointed out that our main goal is to be prepared for SACS.

Individual Assignments:

At this time Dr. Ware asked for each of our committee members to present their committee assignments.

Mr. Whidden presented his presentation first. (1g) Mr. Whidden's response to the students and faculty being aware of changes was as follows:

Changes in technology are always implemented with the objective in mind of minimizing disruption to students and faculty. For instance, the Blackboard server is in need of upgrading. The upgrade was planned for implementation between terms and from midnight until 6:00 am on Saturday and Sunday mornings to minimized disruption. Students and faculty were notified via email prior to the maintenance taking place. Mr. Whidden also stated that the Technology Committee, Deans' Council, and the Student Government Association President are also consulted before technological changes are made unless this is an emergency situation.

(1h) Mr. Whidden's response to the institution providing the students with reasonable technical support for each education software and delivery system required in a program are as follows:

All online course content is delivered via Blackboard. There is online help inside Blackboard for students. (see also orientation/ preparatory emails; Web pages). The help desk is very functional. Students may call the help desk after hours and leave a voice mail for assistance or they may request assistance via email. They may expect a response within eight business hours. We also monitor the infrastructures so that we may be alerted for an emergency after hours. These students may also get with all their hardware and software needs if needed.

Ms. Mita was asked to give her presentation: (1i) Ms. Mita's assignment was to find out how our technology was chosen for our institution. Also, she was to find out if these costs were reasonable for the student. After reviewing this Ms. Mita found that the technologies were judged appropriate to the program. The software utilized for delivery of the course content system is the industry leader and is very cost effective. The underlying infrastructure is solid and is also based on industry leading vendors such as: Cisco, Microsoft, and Dell. (1j) Ms. Mita's assignment on this was to seek and understand the legal and regulatory requirements of the jurisdictions in which our institution operates e.g., requirements for service to those with disabilities, copyright law, state and national requirements for institutions offering educational programs, international restrictions such as export of sensitive information or technologies, etc. This is when Ms. Mita went to our Tiger Paw (the student handbook) and read the following: The Tiger Paw student handbook and the General Catalogue which is given to all students upon entrance into the University has provisions for legal and regulatory requirements of the jurisdictions in which it operates. The different laws include and are not limited to the following: Computer lab policy, Policy on Sexual assault, Drug abuse policy, Computer usage policy for the Library, Policy on the use of computer software, Copyright law, TEACH (Technology, Education and Copyright Harmonization)Act, Email Policy which has among other things restriction on forwarding chain letters, spoofing, attempts to break into other users emails, etc., this policy is also in compliance with the Alabama Research and Education Network Acceptance use policy, Policy on accommodation for individuals with disability, the Student Right to Know Act and campus security Act, Chat room policy, Buckley amendment, and Discrimination based on gender, race, color, national origin, religion and age.

Mrs. Springer was asked to give her presentation: (1c) Mrs. Springer was to research the expenditure end of the program to make sure the student had concrete proof they were in fact going to be able to complete there program. Ms. Springer found that for 2005-2006 that with known posted commitments, we have a deficit in the amount of \$205,046 as of December 31,2005. However, with projected revenues from January – December 2006 our deficit will be covered. Ms. Springer found this not to be a concern for our students. (1d) Do technical and physical plant facilities accommodate the curricular commitments reviewed below, e.g., instructor and student interaction (2e), and appropriateness to the curriculum (2a)? Ms. Springer found Blackboard to be the leader in this type platform. UWA provides for a Blackboard server, network connection, Internet connection, email, and telephone interaction. Files on the Blackboard are backed up daily. Ms. Springer was also to find out whether our facilities are provided directly by the institution or through contractual arrangements, what are the provisions for reliability, privacy, safety, and security? Ms. Springer found that reliability is provided by having two Blackboard servers. One is in production while the second is on reserve for use in the event for production server if the other fails. We are working on an off site location further ensure reliability.

Dr. Ware then made his presentation (1a) Dr. Ware was to find if our content, purposes, organization, and enrollment history were consistent with the institution's role and

mission. Dr. Ware reported that this was in fact the case. He stated that in research we are in fact fulfilling our mission. (1b) Dr. Ware was to find out does the program represent a change to the institution's stated mission and objectives? Dr. Ware stated he went to the office of Institutional Effectiveness and all the information was very well documented. Dr. Ware explained that this was all planned for in our Strategic Planning (Long Term Goals). This was written in such a way that it fits very well.

Calendar Schedule:

The committee set the next meeting time for April 12 at 2:00 p.m. Dr. Ware asked that each member please come with a rough draft prepared for discussion. Dr. Ware then expressed how pleased he was with the results each member had brought to the meeting.

Questions:

Dr. Ware at this time asked each member to look over his or her assigned compliances and asked if they had any questions. The members had no questions and felt that their assigned questions were self explanatory.

Adjourn:

Dr. Ware asked for a motion to adjourn at 3:00 Ms. Springer made a motion to adjourn and Ms. Mita seconded.

Respectfully Submitted

Amy Dial