Academic Technology Committee – A Subcommittee of Faculty Council

AY 20-21 End-of-Year Report

Committee Members:
Andrew Perumal (CLA & Chair), Janna Kellinger (CEHD), Margaret Hart (CLA), Suha Ballout (CNHS), Lusa Lo (CEHD), Aroon Manoharan (MGS), Brian White (CSM), Shan Jiang (CM), Zong-Guo Xia (SFE), Kenneth Fletcher (CSM), James Soldner (CEHD) & Foad Mahdavi Pajouh (CM)

FSU representative:	UG Student Representative:
Welcome Travis Johnston (CLA)	Youssef Fannichi (CM).

Ex-officio Members
Hannah Sevian (Provost Office), Jeffrey A Dusenberry (IT-Research Computing), Yueqing Chen (Library) & Apurva Mehta (IT-Ed Technology)

The agenda and meeting minutes were shared for each of the meetings.

Fall 2020 Report:
The members of the ATC met once a month and discussed a wide array of technologies and services that impact Teaching and Learning. Fall 2020 was ever so challenging; however, the committee members continued to look forward and assisted with accomplishing some rather large / critical projects (listed below). The committee also began discussions on important topics that would help promote faculty professional development as well as assist Ed Tech in selecting technologies in the coming month

Accomplishments:
- Start of the semester issues/feedback
- Opening of Blackboard course shells a few days prior to the start of the semester.
  After reviewing pros and cons and hearing from our student body, this change was implemented for the Spring 2021 term. Students now have access to their Bb course shells 3 days prior to the start of the semester.
- Students not having access to laptops, Internet access, etc.
  Student do have access to the Chromebook Loan program at: https://www.umb.edu/it/chromebooks
  Students needing internet access should be directed
  to: https://www.umb.edu/coronavirus/for_students/academics_remote_learning/tech_support
- Move Zoom recordings to echo360
- Blackboard Migration to the Cloud
  The committee provided guidance and valuable feedback on timing, communications, etc. to ensure that we have a smooth transition.

Programs in Development:
- HyFlex technology in classrooms
- Digital Assistants to assist faculty with technology while teaching
- Recommended Training Topics for the Spring Term
- Review of Proctoring solutions – Respondus Monitor and Honorlock

Presentations Made:
- Library – Overview of UMBrealla

Spring 2021 Report:
The members of the ATC continued to meet once a month during the semester (4 times) and focused the discussion on returning to campus in Fall 2021.

Provost shared his appreciation of the committee's work and the importance of it, especially in these trying times. He shared information about the HyFlex teaching modality and the important role this team might play. He invited members of this committee to attend the demo of the HyFlex technology - which several members did.

Discussion Topics:
1. The number of days when Blackboard might be available prior to the start of the semester. Based on feedback received from students they requested that they be allowed access to Bb course content between 3 and 5 days earlier. The committee reviewed this request and decided to recommend that courses be open 3 days prior to start of the semester. However, the metrics showed that only 100 students took advantage of this. One thought is to give access to Bb 5 days before school starts to see if the metrics change.
2. The Blackboard migration to the cloud was rocky. The time taken to migrate the courses, plus missing information were two major complaints from the faculty. Luckily the migration was planned for the Winter break, thereby minimizing the impact on accessing course content for the Winter term.
3. BeaconFlex – a discussion on the Beaconflex pilot project for the Spring term. The committee members inquired about increasing class size (No); whether faculty would be mandated to teach in BF modality (No); ensuring students attending remotely have the same experience (extensive training will be provided to faculty to ensure there is equity); will BF be available after the pandemic (Yes, the goal is to offer this as a third modality of teaching). Lots of discussion around evaluations: how will this be completed? Collecting of lots of information/data from the pilot participants.

   Recommendations
   Selling the long-term plan and benefits of this (BeaconFlex) program – this will make it more compelling for our faculty. The benefits for our students should be documented and shared. Benefits for Grad courses that are held @ night; international students; etc.

Feedback from Faculty Participating in the Pilot
   Overall, the faculty feedback was very positive; however, faculty were unable to walk the room and were confined to the space behind the desk; students that usually interact in class continue to do so; time taken to come onto campus and setup was long.

Technologies that the Committee Would Carry Forward into Fall
   a. Zoom Cloud Recording
   b. Pronto
   c. Breakout Rooms in Zoom – Students can choose or pre-assign
   d. Assessment/Tests in Bb – draw from a pool of questions based on topic (randomized)
      i. Feedback based on incorrect response
   e. Turnitin – issues with connectivity between Turnitin and Bb
   f. Accommodations when using Zoom – captioning services in a breakout room. No recordings as well.
   g. Google Forms – can turn these into tests and fun activities
   h. Seminar/meeting rooms equipped with AV that allows for remote and in-person meetings
   i. Communication/collaboration IM based tools: Slack channels, Discord, Pronto (recommended)

<u>Return to Campus</u> - Fall 2021 – questions that the committee thought we need to be prepared for:

    a. What do we need to prepare for?

    b. Pedagogies / Technologies you will carry forward to Fall 2021 (assuming we are on campus) - we listed about a dozen (see above)

    c. Continue to provide summer Training Workshops

    d. TEACH Spring 2021 will *not* be dissolved for now … the team will assist with professional development to assist faculty return to campus.

    e. Faculty can continue to record their lectures using echo360 portable/desktop version. Will need wireless microphone – will the media lab have these for faculty to borrow?

    f. Will the rooms, projectors, cables be cleaned?

    g. Student refuses to get vaccinated – no process in place to find out if a student is not vaccinated. UHS will be monitoring the vaccination, similar to the other vaccinations. How will faculty know? If there is a student, will faculty be allowed to teach remotely? Faculty should send a short note to Steve and Travis to get questions answered

<u>New Services:</u>

1. Zoom: IT invested in a site wide license for Zoom allowing each faculty, student and staff have their own 'pro' licenses. This was then integrated with our Single-Sign On service allowing us to use our email credentials to sign in to Zoom. Also, Zoom turned on automatic closed captioning.

2. The Virtual Digital Assistant (VDA) program was established to assist faculty in managing technology in large enrollment classes.

<u>Demos</u>

1. LEAN Library – a demo by Yuequing Chen, Louisa Choi and EK Lee from the library.
   The library is piloting this system, a browser plug-in that facilitates access to library resources. Leanlibrary.com also works on the Chromebook.

<u>New Services – Need ATC Input</u>

1. Course Evaluation System – moving everything online so we can eliminate the Scantron System
2. Proctoring Solution – revisit existing options and consider a single platform
3. OER Program

<u>Recommendations to Faculty Council:</u>

1. BeaconFlex
       a. That this modality for teaching continues beyond the pandemic
       b. That faculty NOT be mandated/required to teach in this modality
       c. That faculty get the appropriate training (eLearning) and support (VDA) if they do teach in this discipline
       d. That there be equity across all students
2. Returning to Campus
       a. That the TEACH Team offers a set of workshops in late summer to help faculty return to campus
3. That the faculty be encouraged to use electronic tools for exams/tests, etc. -- just as they did during the pandemic
4. That ALL course evaluations be completed using either EK or Qualtrics – hence no paper-based sheets
5. That Bb course shells be available between 3 and 5 days prior to the start of the semester.
6. Selection of new chair for the ATC

7. Several members of the committee terms are coming to an end.