

## Distance Education Advisory Committee Minutes

Thursday, October 08, 2009

3:00 p.m. - AD 198

Present: Ana Thompson (Presiding), Kathy Thatcher, Shawna Murphy, Dino Madsen, Gary Donnelly, David Siemens, Michelle DeSalvo, Bill Mixer, Sharyn Polley, Kerri Mahlum, Teresa Corkill, Lois Davis

### I. Call to order

### II. Approval of minutes for the September 10, 2009 meeting

Teresa Corkill asked if the IT pager number had been discussed at the last meeting because it was not in the minutes. It had not been discussed. She also said the emoticon and pager discussions were not reflected in the minutes. Those discussions will be added to the minutes. Bill Mixer moved to approve the minutes with corrections. There was no second.

### III. Announcements

#### a) New Online Student Orientation (HTML-based)

Ana Thompson gave an overview of the new online html-based student orientation draft page. It has basic technical information and contact numbers on it and will have tutorials and other how-to information as well. The page will be outside of Moodle on the DE webpages so that students can get information on how to use Moodle before going into Moodle. It will be piloted in the spring 2010 semester. She asked the committee if its theme should match the design of the new Distance Ed web pages. A committee has been formed to redesign the DE web pages but has not yet met. DEAC agreed that all pages should be consistent with the DE site.

Teresa Corkill suggested adding some information for students about Moodle quizzes and how they are timed so students know what to expect before they open their quizzes. Bill Mixer added that some students need browser help, such as an answer to the questions, what's a cookie and what's a pop-up blocker. Ana said tutorials on the student orientation page will address these issues.

Dino Madsen said some of his students have trouble accessing Moodle from the hospital because of firewalls. Ana asked faculty to let their students know that this is not a Moodle problem and those students would have to contact whoever manages the hospital's firewalls.

The committee asked if there was a Moodle link in the A-Z index. Ana browsed to the index and confirmed that there is.

#### b) Workshops (BU 126)

Ana Thompson will offer the following Moodle trainings in October in the Center for Excellence. More will be offered in November.

1. Moodle Overview – Tuesday, Oct 13, 4-5 p.m.
2. Moodle Backup and Restore – Thursday, Oct 15, 10-11 a.m.
3. Adding Resources to a Moodle course – Monday, Oct 26, 1-2 p.m. (How to add a webpage, etc.)

- c) WebCT access ends December 30, 2009.  
Ana reminded everyone that final target day to have content moved and checked by Remote Learner is December 22, 2009, because WebCT access will end on December 30. Remote Learner will convert courses as requests come in.
- d) Moodle login issues (9/29 and 10/3)  
Students only could not log in to Moodle or WebCT when the LDAP server was down. Faculty could still get into both because their accounts are not LDAP-authenticated. Nursing students were supposed to be taking online tests and the tests had to be printed out. In a similar emergency, instructors can call Ana's cell, 277-4981, or Dave's cell, 258-5488. Teresa Corkill noted that while the faculty were panicking, the students took it all in stride.
- e) Datatel and enrollment issue update  
There was an issue with Datatel in which students were being unenrolled from Moodle courses every night, which caused them to be dropped from groups, their participation to be set to Never (in most instances), and forum read tracking to be reset to unread. David Siemens said that a setting in Moodle requiring manual changes to "read" status had been set to on, but has been turned off. Remote Learner is working on a permanent fix. As of now, students are no longer being unenrolled.

#### IV. Reports

- a) ATC – Margo Perry  
Margo, not present, submitted the following report:

##### Usage

Fall 09 Total tests proctored through today: 542

##### Availability

With the ever increasing number of tests that are being offered through the Academic Testing Center, it is very important that faculty submit their testing information as soon as possible to assure that arrangements can be made for sufficient staffing and hours.

Also, students should be encouraged to schedule testing appointments as much in advance as possible to assure that an appointment is available.

##### URLs for tests

The most efficient and effective way to access testing sites seems to be through links in the class Moodle shell. This allows a smooth test launching with very few steps for the student and proctor, which is also less disruptive to other candidates who are already testing.

This semester, several publisher sites are experiencing very slow response time. When selecting testing sites, we would appreciate if faculty would select sites that just require a proctor password rather than a unique URL for every test. The proctors have neither the time to place each unique URL on favorites and then remove it after the testing period nor the time to input a unique URL for every testing appointment.

- b) WyDEC, WyClass, Gov. Task Force – Ana Thompson  
Ana went to Sheridan to meet with the WyDEC group. They talked about the state

strategic plan, how the third objective includes fully supporting distance education. Another item under discussion is having a centralized area for student class registration. Currently, the WYClass portal ([wyclass.wy.edu](http://wyclass.wy.edu)) offers information for distance course offerings state-wide. From within the WYClass site, students can send requests for specific course offerings to any of the Wyoming colleges. There are some improvements being scheduled to WYClass (among others): a) search function to list results in according to terms entered, in order of how closely they relate; b) more informative reporting for WyDEC administrators; c) students email confirmation of course request and reiterating that they still have to go through the actual registration process.

WyDEC will meet again twice this month via Elluminate to discuss the concept of a centralized center for excellence proposed by the Task Force. The Wyoming CoE office or entity is envisioned to work a state liaison with the Commission, higher education institutions, K-12 schools and the state workforce. It would also be the main contact office for Quality Matters, connect instructional design resources and coordinate the annual WyDEC conferences.

Next WyDEC conference is May 24-26, 2010, at Sheridan College.

c) Course Conversions – Dave Siemens

Please contact Dave if you have courses in WebCT to be converted. There is still content to be moved across if it is needed. There is an automated conversion process but it requires manual checking to make sure all content has come across. Our final cutoff deadline for WebCT is December 30, 2009, after which we will not be able to export packages or access course materials. WebCT backups will be unusable. The conversions take about two weeks.

Kathy Thatcher asked how many instructors were still teaching in WebCT. Dave said there are about 15 classes live in WebCT.

d) Video Tutorials

Ami Dyrek is creating Moodle tutorials using Adobe Captivate. An instructor overview sample was shown to the committee. Ana said more would be forthcoming for both instructors and students. The tutorials can be linked to various pages in and outside of Moodle. The tutorials are meant to be short and topic-focused. There will also be handouts available soon.

Dino Madsen asked if Captivate has audio capabilities, which it does. Kathy Thatcher asked if the tutorials could be paused and rewind. Ana said they could be and Ami will make these functions available.

V. Unfinished business

a) Distance Education Site Redesign Committee

The redesign committee consists of DEAC members Margo H. Perry, Kerri Mahlum, Dino Madsen and David Siemens. Ana will set up a meeting time and will plan on communicating with College Relations for their input. She would like to use the DEAC forums area to discuss improving site navigation and other ideas.

b) Online Student Orientation

There is a student orientation page in Moodle in addition to the student orientation

page that will be on the DE website. Students can log in as a guest to access the tutorials and other information available there.

c) CC Student email and course creation

Ana would like to emphasize the use of students' CC email accounts. Students are missing important messages and some do not know that they have Casper College Google email accounts and applications. The revised distance education welcome letter informs students of their accounts and their personal log in information.

Teresa Corkill asked if course availability one week before classes could be shut off. Ana said course availability can be controlled by faculty in course settings. Faculty can hide their whole course, or allow access but only show Topic 0 with the syllabus, and general course information. The committee discussed the option to add extra information to the course description, such as required textbooks, but it would increase the length of the course descriptions on the front page of Moodle. Lois and Ana mentioned that the course descriptions should be standard, according to the course schedule. Ana reiterated the option to hide course content except for the topic/week 0 that contains book and syllabus information to help students have the chance to get class materials so they are ready the first day of class. She also mentioned that main reason to make courses available the week prior to the start of semester is to help our students.

Bill Mixer asked that it be emphasized to students that if they contact their instructors before classes begin they should use instructors' campus email addresses and not the email within Moodle.

d) Automatic course creation in Moodle

Ana announced that distance education is not planning on creating all courses in Moodle for the spring 2010 semester. At the end of the spring semester there will be an upgrade and Moodle components will be on two servers instead of one. Moodle will not be available for the first week of the mini-mester while the upgrade happens. Fall 2010 will be the earliest that all courses would be created in Moodle.

Bill Mixer asked if having all courses in Moodle would give students and faculty the impression that all courses would be offered online. Ana said that after some training and standardization, as well as communication and buy-in from faculty, students and faculty should know what to expect.

Ana said course creation in Moodle provides an online environment for all the classes CC offers, and courses can be hidden if they are not being used. In case of natural disasters such as floods on campus classes could still function because course content is backed up in Moodle shells. The college would have to communicate to face-to-face students that their courses are still available online. Ana also added that students want asynchronous access to their classes. She said the state wants the colleges to follow the current trends and fully supports distance education delivery options.

e) Emoticons

Ana said the emoticon feature is available in Moodle but is turned off. In classes

that use programming the emoticon function adds easter eggs or unexpected emoticons such as the thumbs up icon, produced by “(n)”, to the code posted by instructors or students. She also mention that the standards symbols for a smile :) or a wink ;) can still be used instead of the emoticons in Moodle.

## VI. New business

### a) Kathy Thatcher – Assessment

Kathy reminded DEAC about the course evaluation committee. She said current face-to-face evaluations are not very useful so her committee is working to improve the content of the questions and the delivery mode. The distance education evaluation is different than the face-to-face one and they should be the similar. She will share progress with DEAC as it is made and ask for feedback. She said she is using the nursing department evaluations as a resource/guide for developing new course evaluations. Kathy is offering assessment training in the Center for Excellence and will address the issue of student engagement in evaluations. She is hoping eventually to have all the evaluations online, which will save the academic assistants time not having to transcribe them.

### b) DE Letter for Spring 2010 (sample letter passed to committee members)

#### 1. Registration -> DE Letter -> (please see above)

i. Casper College Student Email (<http://my.caspercollege.edu>)

ii. Online Student Orientation

iii. Student Guide for Moodle

iv. What else can we do as an institution to help our students get started?

Ana asked for faculty input about what distance education can do to make students' initial online experience easier. The group suggested having a Moodle link on the front page of the CC website. Ana said when CC has single sign on capability more options will be available right from the front page. She also said that one of the Quality Matters suggestions is to create a “start here” area in online courses that provides initial instructions and directions, etc., to students.

v. There was discussion about calling “distance education” something else because students taking online classes on campus do not see it as education from a distance. Ana said the Department of Education definition of distance education includes online, hybrid and web enhanced courses. The group suggested using the word “online” in place of “distance” or using both words at the same time. Ana said that may be an institutional decision, as distance education is an established college department and we can talk about it some more as we desesign the DE site.

vi. Online Tutoring – Writing Lab. Development is in progress.

#### 2. We need a new Distance Ed definition for the catalog

Ana handed out the current definition and a sample from Wikipedia. She said the current catalog description of Distance Education needs to be revised and asked for input. Teresa Corkill asked if a program that includes some intensive weekends on campus can still be

called an online program. Ana said was listed as online with required on-campus time, then it is online.

Sharyn Polley asked how other instructors handle absent students and make-up work when the students call Student Services to let that office know they will be absent and Student Services then passes the information along to the instructor as excused absences. The nursing department said they are being lenient at the administration's request due to the H1N1 virus. Sharyn is concerned because she does not have access to documentation from Student Services. Teresa Corkill said the nursing department requires a doctor's excuse for illness related absences. Some instructors do not address an absence unless it becomes a habit.

VII. Adjournment

VIII. Next meeting, Thursday, November, 12, 2009, 3 p.m., Library classroom.