

FCET Report to the ITPB Spring 2005

At its October, 2004 meeting, the ITPB passed the following requests to the FCET:

1. Create a continuing and evolving campus-wide vision and implementation plan for Information Technology in undergraduate instruction (based on the campus IT vision document)
2. Make recommendations to the ITPB on key IT infrastructure initiatives that impact undergraduate instruction. With regard to this latter request, the expectation is that the FCET will spearhead an assessment of SAKAI and its potential role at UCLA.
3. Make recommendations to the ITPB on UCLA's structural and organizational requirements for pursuing institutional planning on Educational Technology.

Below are the first of a set of FCET recommendations in response to this directive.

Introduction

The time has passed when the use of technology in instruction was found only in small pockets of innovation. Educational technology now plays a critical role in learning and teaching in many disciplines at UCLA. The FCET believes that our students now require a consistent, powerful, and transparent application of our educational technology applications across disciplines and across the campus. The key characteristics of an integrated educational technology infrastructure must be:

- Availability to any faculty member, department, division or school
- Consistency and reliability in the quantity and quality of service
- Full integration of data exchange with relevant administrative systems (for example, verification of faculty and student identities and electronic submission of final grades)
- Full integration with the UCLA Digital Library's collections of online materials and eScholarship
- Compatibility with national standards

The FCET views UCLA's current position as not meeting these criteria.

The FCET Vision

The FCET believes that UCLA must rebalance IT in support of instruction by putting resources into general utility educational technology services that are increasingly expected at a university of UCLA's size and reputation that are consistently available to all departments and disciplines. This strategy will enable local IT staff to focus on discipline-specific services to meet the needs of particular faculty and subjects. The FCET is calling for a new institutional commitment to supporting technology in teaching that requires additional resources as well as the realignment of existing resources.

Specific Recommendations

The FCET seeks endorsement from the ITPB for the following three recommendations as initial steps to balance what is needed as utility and what is “disciplinary.” Together, these three components will provide UCLA with an excellent position from which to expand innovative use of technology in teaching.

1. Develop a single virtual help desk available 24 hours/day, 7 days/week to support faculty and students in the use of utility educational technology on the one hand and a referral for discipline-specific support on the other. UCLA has significant IT expertise in departments and divisions and in campus services such as BruinOnLine and CLICC that can be brought together to develop a seamless and transparent suite of help desk services. Freeing local IT staff from significant components of utility support will enable them to focus more on discipline-specific innovation. If endorsed, the FCET will undertake broad campus consultation in order to provide an implementation and business plan by fall 2005.
2. Select a single application to support collaboration and teaching tools for instructional, research and administrative groups. Sakai, an open source community solution, is being adopted by increasing numbers of institutions and has ever-increasing resources invested into its development. UCLA has been moving in a direction that makes adopting this system extremely advantageous. If endorsed, the FCET will undertake broad campus consultation in order to provide an implementation and business plan by fall 2005.
3. Create a collaborative campus-wide approach to support IT work among faculty, students and IT staff at UCLA. An integrated consortium will enable UCLA to improve learning effectiveness, remain cost effective, increase faculty and student satisfaction, and compete successfully for grant opportunities that support innovative applications of educational technology. To effect this approach, UCLA will need to expand and coordinate its advanced technology development capabilities, assessment expertise, interdisciplinary approaches, fusion of teaching and research, and collaboration with other enterprises. If endorsed, the FCET will develop the process and structure necessary to create this plan by winter 2006.

The FCET sees other critical components of an integrated educational technology architecture for UCLA. In the opinion of the FCET, UCLA’s services in support of technology in teaching are no stronger than the weakest link in the ET system across the campus. The FCET encourages and endorses each of the units below to develop plans and request resources for scaling up their current level of service to enable full integration into the UCLA delivery of instruction.

1. The Library-I: An instructional materials repository and accompanying services will enable UCLA faculty and students to develop and share materials with colleagues at UCLA, within UC and with the public. We anticipate that the UCLA Digital Library will be the solution based on pilot projects and the national movement to develop seamless inter-operability between digital libraries and course management systems such as Sakai. We encourage the Library to intensify its efforts in supporting this component of a digital library.
2. The Library-II: Student proficiency in research skills, literature review and IT competencies is critical to their academic success and for UCLA to achieve an IT-rich learning environment. We endorse the Library's spearheading a campus-developed plan for providing students with information and tools to achieve the information proficiency they need to be successful learners.

3. **OID-I:** UCLA classrooms must remain in step with new pedagogical approaches and technology advancements. OID is the primary provider of equipment and support services for the use of technology in classrooms, but its resources in the past several years have not kept up with needs of the campus and the demands of the faculty. We encourage OID to frame requirements for an IT-rich classroom infrastructure of equipment and service that will place UCLA in the forefront of comparable universities by enabling faculty and students to use technology in the classroom any time and place.
4. **OID-II:** In 2003, the “Blended Instruction Case Studies” initiative was begun to enable learning at the institutional level from innovations in instructional technology and pedagogy. The diffusion of the teaching and learning tools and pedagogical approaches emerging through the Blended Instruction Case Studies to all undergraduate courses and interested instructors requires an expanded and permanent source of funds to scale services to match the vast number of undergraduate courses waiting to be considered. We encourage OID to frame requirements for a significantly expanded suite of services to support a campus-wide commitment to explore IT-enriched pedagogy that solves real academic problems and improve the learning experience for students, particularly in high-enrollment courses.
5. **ATS:** The lack of consistent access to instructional software continues to be a barrier to teaching and learning. We recommend that instructional funding be given to "Software Central" and the "Technology Sandbox" to expand services to support the selection, dissemination and evaluation of open source (free) and shareware alternatives to proprietary software solutions and to work increasingly to provide remote cost-effective access for students and instructors to a toolbox of instructional software.

Why is this important?

Both UCLA faculty and undergraduates require and expect a world-class research institution to provide the tools and environment in which both individual and collaborative innovation in teaching, learning and research can flourish and succeed.

The FCET strongly believes that the need for an integrated educational technology infrastructure is fundamental to and should be driven by improving instruction at both the programmatic level and at the individual faculty level. As examples of programmatic potential, the FCET recommends three initial areas of focus for improving the undergraduate learning experience using technology:

- create virtual laboratories to augment or even replace physical laboratories
- create “small” learning experiences within large impersonal undergraduate courses
- provide increased direct research experience for our students in their courses.

In its first year, the Blended Instruction Case Studies has already begun to inform the campus on how to use technology effectively to address such learning improvements. With OID, we are now exploring mechanisms to communicate to our faculty the lessons learned from these studies. We envision a time in the near future in which every faculty member can draw upon a rich palette of ET resources as appropriate to enrich both the teaching and learning at UCLA.

With this vision and initial set of recommendations, the FCET is calling for a new commitment to unencumbered technology excellence at the institutional level that will enable UCLA students, faculty and educational technology staff to work creatively together with our national and global collaborators.