Minutes of Meeting January 14th, 2010

Approved Feb 11, 2010

Final

Committee Attendees: Austin, Grisham, Hanna-Harwell, Jansma, Lew, Liggett (Chair), Loeher, Schultz, Smallberg, Snyder, Walker. Guest: Christopher Lynch

1. Quick topics
    a. AIME complaint regarding Video Furnace reserves – Announcement went out to faculty at the end of last year announcing the suspension of the service pending the resolution of the complaint. Next week there is a meeting with Campus Counsel, AIME's president and their lawyer. Still unclear is whether the University or UC will take on defending fair-use in a broader context.
    b. E-Sections – At the beginning of this quarter Chemistry 14D an organic chemistry class, found itself over enrolled by close to 100 students. In an effort to accommodate all the students, 3 additional discussion sections where added. The difference for these E-Sections is that students will only attend the lecture via Bruincast, but they will still have face-to-face discussion sections. Judi Smith has asked the FCET to work on forming some guidelines and policies for this approach before it becomes more routinized. Michelle Lew has been asked work on a draft of the guidelines for the FCET to discuss at a future meeting.

2. HSSEAS experience with online instruction with Prof. Christopher S. Lynch, Director of the MS Engineering Online Program

As background to a discussion of the Engineering Online Program, Prof. Lynch described his experiences at Georgia Tech where he was responsible for teaching programs on three different campuses. These included many distance learning courses. The constituency at the Savannah campus was internal, allowing students at one campus to take a course at another, the program also offered a great way to reach students who couldn't otherwise access the courses. For exa2mple, Prof. Lynch had a student who was deployed in Iraq. In contrast to the UCLA Engineering Online program, a substantial infrastructure investment was made at Georgia Tech: production stages, classrooms for synchronized distance learning, remote site classrooms, hundreds of thousands of dollars in studio equipment.

The Georgia Tech program also differed from the UCLA Engineering program as the former included the distance learning students in regular courses. In his experience at Georgia Tech teaching both in a traditional setting and for the distance learning program, Prof. Lynch noticed a change in student behavior. There was less note taking and more discussion with the online program because the on-campus students had access to the recorded lectures and could replay them later.

The added workload was modest with a small number of distance students. With 35 in-person students and 6 to7 online students the added workload was okay, but as this grew to 45 in-person and 20 online the workload was comparable to teaching two full sections. Even being given a TA didn't help much. Online students generated substantial numbers of emails and calls. It seemed that the online students didn't interact with other students as much and couldn't help each other so there was more interaction with the instructor. To make matters worse, at Georgia Tech there was no additional financial compensation or credit for teaching the additional online students.

When the UCLA Engineering School launched its online program in 2007 it got agreement for extra faculty compensation for participation. Faculty are paid half a summer 9th for course development and half a 9th each time the course is offered. An online section is definitely more work than an on- campus section but of the sixty or so sections taught so far only one faculty member has said "never again."

Is the on-line program making money? The program is currently in year three and hasn't lost money since its inception. They use small production studios, the lectures are done in powerpoint and recorded. There are live, online recitations with a TA weekly. The program is currently about $300K ahead since inception. At $3300/course, about 12-14 students are needed to break even. They can run a section of about 28-30 students before they need to split it in to two. If they could find the students and fill all the spots (about double the current enrollment) the program might net about $2M. There is also the extra benefit of employing many on campus engineering grad students as TAs. So yes there is potential, but these online students are not typical students, this is a ready pool of students. It is quite common in large engineering and aerospace companies to have programs where the employees get reimbursed up to 15K a year for enrollment in advanced education courses provided they get at least a B in the course. Prof. Lynch believes that if students were paying for themselves, the on-line program would have only about 10-12 students versus the 200 currently enrolled (for a 2 year program). Recruiting these students is a contact sport. Prof. Lynch has to actively recruit with presentations at firms such as Lockheed and at school events where they court graduating seniors, letting them know that even though they are going into industry now, they can still get a masters online. Right now, the existing infrastructure could probably handle 400 students, but another administrator would need to be hired for the program.

Recently there have been articles in the newspapers at the Regents and campus level, talking of an 11th virtual campus. Prof. Lynch feels this is a terrible idea. At the undergraduate level this type of learning is handled well by such places as the University of Phoenix and is not what UC should be about. However, when you look at individual campuses there is a great deal that we can do with technology to better educate our students. It should be about education, however, not about lowering costs. We shouldn't be recording lectures with the goal of hiring fewer instructors. An excellent use of the technology is to allow faculty to record a lecture for a scheduled absence or put remedial portions of a course in recordings rather than taking time in class.

Professor Lynch feels there are opportunities for on-line course the university is not taking advantage of. He has noticed a great deal of Humanties courses taught through UCLA Extension that are not being taught by UCLA faculty. Is it because Extension pays too little to its instructors?

Or that typically these are $300/courses rather than $3000? Even places like Lockheed are no longer funding MBAs, just master's degrees in Engineering.

Something that is very important to HSSEAS about the online program is that it is viewed as the same as the on campus program. It's taught by the same faculty and faculty are told to teach and grade with the same learning outcomes in mind. The applicants go through the regular admissions process. Some could easily be admitted on campus and although some are marginal they all are very motivated working professionals. In general, the online students are doing as well as the on-campus ones. A great deal of resources are put into the online courses in the form of TA time and instructor to student ratio. Prof. Lynch reported on one disaster to date when an online faculty member had no TA and only gave the course as much time as an on campus course. After the midterm there were only 6 students left out of the original 27. Some faculty felt the online students didn't have the proper prerequisites, but keep in mind that prerequisites for graduate students aren't enforced since students have such different backgrounds. The program counsels students about where their background might be lagging, but it's ultimately up to the student.

Professor Lynch feels that moving towards designated departmental degrees, e.g., MS in aerospace engineering and even allowing online students to transfer credit back into the department are important steps for the program to take. Area directors get half a summer 9th to organize the offerings and do student advising for the area.

The program currently uses Engineering's home grown course management system but is looking for more ways to help increase student to student communication. They are considering an orientation with students each Fall, so the students will have the chance to meet each other in person which will encourage student-to-student communication during the course. The format of the class is a narrated power point. They are upgrading from Apreso to Echo360 (both from Anystream) which will allow for Vodcasts to be played on an iPod. Equipment can be used in a studio-type setting or taken into a live classroom to record. There were some concerns about student's feelings about the recordings. Feedback from students has been positive, which is viewed as a combination of students becoming more receptive of things delivered online and faculty gaining more experience teaching online. HSSEAS has even come up with a set of best practices for faculty, such as repeating the question that's asked by the live audience if the lecture is recorded in the classroom.

Exams are scheduled in advance. All are on the same day; Saturday at week 5 and week 10. Students must come to campus to take the exam. About half come, or they can take it the Friday before at the company's HR department if it's a large company setup for this (e.g., Boeing) or even local colleges will typically proctor an exam for a fee.

Are lectures static? So far they have gotten reasonable replay out of the lectures. Faculty might request funding to update a few lectures of a series. Prof. Lynch feels that every third time they should probably start over, just to freshen the lecture and take advantage of new technology (e.g., old recordings not able to show on an iPod).

They have found the classes can be tighter and more organized. A 2-hour lecture can be reduced to under an hour. This varies by lecturer. Prof. Lynch has told professors not to add more information to a lecture than they would to an on campus lecture as that would put undue pressure

on the students just because the medium allowed the lecture to go faster. Instead he says they should work through some example problems in the extra time.

A real driver for students to participate in an online program is travel time. With their work schedule, even coming just from El Segundo a student would need to allow 4 hours to drive to UCLA and attend a 2 hour lecture and drive home and need to do that twice a week. USC's online program has 1800 students at 40K/each for a 3 year program.

Will it still be UCLA if it's virtual? Prof. Lynch feels that many undergraduates are just looking for the easiest path through. However, there are benefits of a campus college experience. Online you typically just get through the course. Leave that to University of Phoenix, they do a good job of doing online undergraduate courses, but that's not the same as a college education, or a UCLA campus community. What is training versus education?

In the HSSEAS online masters program they are finding that skills type courses are well defined and easier to translate from an in-person to an online course with equal student success. It is much harder to do integrative type courses, with these they find they need to encourage much more interaction amongst students, TAs and instructors for the course to be successful.

Next Meeting: Thursday February 11th 3:30-5:00pm in Powell 186