

Faculty Council on Educational Technology
Annual Report, 2004-2005
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The Faculty Council on Educational Technology met seven times from October 2004 to June 2005. We had a productive year, addressing and resolving several issues, and also laid out an agenda of ongoing projects for next year. Our effectiveness this year was due largely to our use of task-oriented subcommittees, each of which investigated a particular problem, deliberated solutions, and made a proposal for consideration by the entire council. Here we describe four of those major projects in greater detail:

1. Electronic Plagiarism

Faculty in most disciplines find that plagiarism is a severe and prevalent impediment to learning. We had several meetings in this task group and in the full council to deal with ways that technology can be brought to bear on this problem. We focused mostly on automated plagiarism checking software, such as tools that some peer institutions have recently adopted. We considered a variety of pedagogical, practical, financial, legal, and privacy issues surrounding the use of such software to assess and prevent plagiarism. Although we affirm that the problem is important and urgent, we are not prepared to recommend a particular tool. We support the implementation of a local research study to investigate electronic plagiarism at the University of Washington and to evaluate the efficacy of the several plagiarism detection services. We agree that administering the study is outside FCET's scope, but we are interested in giving input on its execution (based on our extensive efforts in looking into this issue so far) and in developing policy informed by the study. We have begun outreach toward relevant units of faculty governance and administration, efforts that will continue into next year. The Faculty Council on Student Affairs (FCSA) and the Faculty Council on Instructional Quality (FCIQ) have both expressed an interest in this project. To supplement this study, we would like to hear from any units on campus that already use automated plagiarism detection tools in their instructional programs.

2. Wireless Technology Implementation on UW Campus

This task group considered pedagogical implications of the plan to implement universal wireless Internet access at UW. One FCET member pointed out that wireless technology was implemented at UW-Bothell without any input from the faculty and without faculty oversight. There are broad guidelines in place for its use and abuse, but there has never been a thoughtful consideration by the faculty as a whole of the technology and its implications in the classroom. Many instructors report that students are distracted in the classroom by their own laptops (surfing the Web, sending e-mail, shopping online) or by the activities of other students using laptops. Although this technology has potentially severe effects on the classroom learning environment, faculty had no input on the implementation of this technology and no control over its use. As the Seattle campus moves toward universal implementation of wireless technology, FCET argues that it is very important to involve faculty in considering the pedagogical implications of this technology. Faculty should both advise the implementation of technology (to allow flexibility for instructors to control the learning environment in their classes) and should develop a policy on classroom wireless Internet use that reserves for faculty the power to facilitate a learning environment that best suits their class designs.

FCET has been looking at the technology and has taken part in some of the activities of the Wireless Advisory Group (WAG), which is a subcommittee of the Academic Technology

Advisory Committee (A-TAC). WAG has a mandate to implement the technology on the Seattle campus as soon as possible, so it is likely that wireless in the classrooms will be in place before the faculty is aware of its implementation and its implications. Two FCET members attended WAG meetings and were successful in getting that group to agree to add a paragraph to their Web page stating that it is their intent that the faculty needs to step in and set relevant policy. FCET believes that it would be appropriate to develop a policy that would benefit both faculty and students on this issue. We hope to work with the Faculty Council on Educational Outreach (FCEO) on this issue next year, and to have an FCET representative sit on A-TAC this fall.

3. Performance Contract/Agreement

The purpose of the Performance Contract (now titled performance agreement) is to establish a new relationship between the State and the University of Washington (all 3 campuses) that will align higher education policies so that we can jointly meet the challenge of other states' increased investment in research universities [for more details, see <http://www.washington.edu/admin/pb/home/pdf/perf-contract.pdf>]. The Performance Contract between the University and Olympia has been long in discussion and various stages of development and has dramatically changed shape over the last few years. The new UW Administration has shifted focus away from the Agreement as fiscal blueprint and has instead aggressively capitalized on the institutional history of the document, and the knowledge embedded in it, to better highlight intrinsic and chronic problems with state funding for the University.

In some past iterations the performance document swerved into possible FCET advisory territory as it attempted to set some quantitative assessments on courses, outcomes, etc., some of which rely heavily on educational technology. These outcomes, being essentially set by the State in a formal document but without direct consultation over parallel educational technology funding adjustments, could trickle down from the Administration to the most fundamental decision making in departments and programs and produce a dramatic and deleterious effect. Because of this possibility, the FCET created a sub-committee to carefully review the document for places where language, funding rates, and accountability adjustments could be more judiciously and strategically constructed.

However, since the document is no longer a precise blueprint for funding and now serves primarily as a discursive tool for framing State funding questions, our recommendations would simply be to follow our mandate: stay vigilant, construct the best advisory input, and be realistically connected to conversations pertaining to the use and development of educational technology at all levels of the University.

4. FCET Core Priorities Revisited (Internal Document)

FCET members felt that the priorities as drafted last year were not truly descriptive of the Council's role and function. The FCET core priorities were revisited this year and some changes were made and approved by the members to better describe the function of the council. The revised core priorities are shown below:

The FCET pursues information, develops recommendations for policy, and prepares reports or legislative proposals, when appropriate (and in accordance with University Handbook Sections 42-33 and 42-45), in the following areas:

- Innovative and successful use of technology in education
- Assessments of the impact of existing and new technology on teaching and learning
- Training and support for faculty who wish to integrate technology into their courses
- Ways to encourage faculty to incorporate technology into their teaching
- Faculty access to classrooms and equipment that permit the use of technology in education
- Other issues that may arise involving the use of technology in education