Blended Learning Taskforce Meeting  
November 6, 2013, 11:00 am  
Summary

Present: Dr. M. Bishop, Dr. A. Cantrell, Dr. S. Hanson, Dr. C. Harle, Dr. A. Kane, Dr. M. Marsiske, Dr. J. Pomeranz, Dr. K. Von Castel Roberts (by phone), Ms. Susan White (by phone)  
Absent: Dr. C. Prins, Dr. M. Perri, Ms. S. Griner (student), Dr. O. Shechtman  
Also Present: Tom Livoti (AHC IT)

1. Dr. Hanson reported that Jill Pease drafted a shell for the Blended Learning website, which was displayed at the meeting for review and suggestions by the taskforce members. She did mention that the website design is currently a template, and it can be restructured as desired by the taskforce. **AP: The taskforce should take time to look at the detailed content after the meeting and decide if anything should be added or edited. Members should email Dr. Hanson with suggestions, and she will bring these changes to Jill. Jill will then revise the website and send it out again.**

   a. **About Tab:** The “Potential benefits” section bullet points were drafted from an earlier meeting, and some of the language has been modified. Dean Perri’s PowerPoint he presented to the faculty was placed in the “Learn more” section. The taskforce suggested including 3 or 4 other PowerPoint PDFs created by others.

   b. **Taskforce Tab:** Although the PowerPoint from the “Learn more” section does not have an up-to-date list of taskforce members, members are all listed correctly under the Taskforce Tab. One member suggested a tabular format of the taskforce members within this section that includes their departments and links to contacts. All members agreed that it would be beneficial to include a brief timeline of the taskforce initiative showing past work, progress, and upcoming plans. This could also include a list of courses that have been converted throughout the initiative. **AP: The taskforce members will review outside the meeting to provide further formatting suggestions.**

   c. **Resources Tab:** It was suggested that there be resource links beyond article readings, such as subcategories for software and training resources. Blended learning course examples could be included, along with 2-3 minute video spotlights on what is done in the courses.
d. General Formatting: It was recommended that resources be clearly organized for access. For example: Faculty Focus News is redundantly placed under the Resources Tab as well as on the home page as an RSS Feed, and this layout is not ideal. Structurally changing the labels may help with this. It was suggested that the RSS Feed could serve as a placeholder for accomplishments. AP: **The taskforce should decide on main tabs/headers and main subcategories, with placeholders as needed. Also, the taskforce should decide whether they want the Home page dynamic or static.**

e. Website Purpose: The website provides faculty with outreach modes and communication tools, and serves as a clearinghouse for information and resources. It also serves as a communication tool between the taskforce and the College as a whole. The Faculty Institute should be highlighted as a beginning step. It was suggested that a college-wide email should be sent with a link to the bare-bones website.

2. The group then discussed the BL evaluation provided by Dr. Pomeranz, who began with lecture assessments and looked at student comments to see if the evaluation captured the information desired by the taskforce. Dr. Pomeranz structured the evaluation to include Likert scales with open-ended questions toward the end. The BL evaluation content overall should be short yet comprehensive to obtain useful information that would not be addressed in the standard course evaluation. AP: **The taskforce should further review the evaluation to see if any areas of needed information have not been clearly captured in the questions and response options.**

   a. It was suggested that an opening to the evaluation could be provided to explain what the survey is trying to accomplish and to promote clarity, such as “When answering questions, think of this…”

   b. The evaluation should be more comparative with regular courses to discover dimensions of the BL experience the taskforce hadn’t thought about. For example: One student highlighted things the BL course didn’t help them with. It might be beneficial to ask about challenges encountered by the students. Also, from the student’s perspective, is there anything they can do or learn more effectively from BL? It is still undecided as to whether these should be specific or open-ended questions.

   c. There should be questions about technical constraints for students, such as quality of video, bandwidth, and whether the interface and navigation are intuitive.

   d. Clarify what is meant by statements and questions. For example: Quality – is it referring to course materials or the instructor. Make sure the meanings of lectures, assessments, and in-class activities are explicit and concrete.

   e. It was requested that the term “blended learning” be reduced in use and that questions are structured more specifically.
f. In the Qualtrix formatting, a back arrow should be placed for backward navigation. It was noted by some taskforce members that if the evaluation is online-only, lack of responses may become a problem. Other members suggested possible discussion of the evaluation in class, but time constraints and large class sizes can be barriers to successfully completing it in class.

g. It was also suggested that all of the questions could be open-ended. The drawbacks to this are massive data for coding and possible short, one-sentence comments. The benefit is that the survey might not have to ask as many questions, especially if responses to the standard evaluations at the end of the semester are reviewed for information as well.

h. The taskforce briefly discussed the possibility of a focus group complementary to this BL evaluation.

3. Tom Livoti joined the meeting to help discuss the infrastructure and connection issues regarding BL. It was suggested that there should be both short-term and long-term planning with Tom’s group to address the conversion of courses to BL. Dr. Randy Graff is another resource the taskforce can work with as well.

   a. Tom mentioned that if too many students log on at once it might slow the network and create simultaneous connection issues. He suggested that the Meru network allows for high density and uses time slicing, so this may be a better option for BL courses.

   b. Tom also stressed the importance of communication and service requests regarding the needs of BL courses. His team must know how many access points are in each room, and whether there are enough access points for all of the seats in the room as well. He suggested a possible survey of the building to get these answers, and also mentioned that new technology coming out in the near future may help solve some of these issues. **AP: If there are connection issues now, members should contact Dr. Hanson who will then contact Tom for immediate service.**

   c. Over the next 5 years, more than 80 classes will be converted to this model, so the rooms must be prepped for interactive activities. Tom mentioned that bandwidth shouldn’t be a problem, but there needs to be enough access points. Also, different instructors will have different rooms, so there needs to be a versatile set up for BL courses. He suggested that a funding proposal could be submitted to use student technology fees for these upgrades.

   d. There is minimal expectation that the students on the client-side have the right set-up for the best BL experience. It has been noted that for 9 out of 10 students with technical difficulties, it is their internet that is the problem.

   e. It was also mentioned that most HPNP classrooms don’t have microphones or speakers, so Dr. Graff’s group can help with this multimedia solution.

   f. **AP: The taskforce should draft a document planning the next steps for the infrastructure and network needs, and Tom and Dr. Graff can begin the conversation on what needs to be done.**