ISIT Report — November 2012

Issues impacting students and teaching

1. **Accreditation visiting team's concerns in the technology area**—focussed on how does BC assess the effectiveness of the use of technology. We do have workshop surveys, including one taken by those who complete the three-week "Moodle mechanics" course led by Tracy Lovelace (and occasionally with help by Sarah Phinney). But how do we assess the long-term impact of those workshops?

2. **Development of additional pedagogical training and support for online faculty**—is one of the items in the accreditation Actionable Improvement Plan #2. ISIT discussed this item at length again and in light of the significantly lower student success/retention rates in our online courses as documented in the BC accreditation self-evaluation report and the ISIT distance education task force of a few years ago, we will again recommend to the Academic Senate the creation of a online teaching certification process. A formal recommendation will be coming in the spring when more of the details are worked out but the rationale will include reasons like

   a. Teaching online IS different than teaching face-to-face as evidenced by our significantly lower student success/retention rates in our online courses.

   b. Many institutions with a significant number of online course offerings recognize that teaching online IS different than teaching face-to-face and therefore require their online instructors to go through a certification process.

   c. Face-to-face teaching has been going on literally for centuries in a higher-education setting and in other settings, it has been occuring for as long as Homo Sapiens has been on the Earth, so we have a natural affinity to that mode of education and communication. Teaching and learning over the web is just a couple of decades old and the often asynchronous communication pattern is something we're still trying to figure out how to do well.

   d. The federal government is taking a closer look at distance education with attention to how effectively teachers communicate with their online students. Cerro Coso was very recently the subject of a federal audit of its online program to make sure their online courses were not just glorified correspondence courses. What is at stake is financial aid dollars (major amount of dollars!). Now, the federal government isn't tying financial aid funding to student success rates (yet) but the state government is certainly make some noise about tying funding to student success rates and our online program is a target.

3. A preliminary "Best Practices for Online Teaching at BC" checklist was reviewed. Further work and finalizing of the list will hopefully be possible now that the accreditation visit is over. However, once the checklist is finished, the question is what will we do with that checklist? How will we use it in our assessment of online courses? What is not already embedded within the "Moodle mechanics" short course will certainly be incorporated in future versions of the short course. If an online teaching certification process is approved, the checklist would be embedded within the training for the certificate. Can we incorporate it into the faculty evaluation process for those teaching

online courses? (If yes, then it would be implemented after plenty of work with CCA and negotiations with management, of course.)

4. **Standardization of Classroom/Student Response Systems ("clickers")**—will be studied by ISIT in the spring (select the link to find out what is a "clicker" system). There are currently two or three clicker systems in use on campus with more instructors wanting to use the technology but concerned about the cost to the student especially if the students cannot use the hardware in other classes. Multiple systems also make it difficult (at least) for Information Services to provide technical support.

5. **Policy and procedure language that encourages innovative but "safe" use of instructional technology**—was formally approved. This was a hold-over from last spring that we forgot to formally vote on. See my March 2012 report for the language.

6. **Our interactive television classrooms**—are under-utilized. These classrooms on the bottom floor of the library are designed to hold classes taught simultaneously at the main campus and the Delano Center. In these tight budget times, it is an easy way to reach both sites at once, so please consider using those interactive TV classrooms.

Other Items of Note

1. **A single technology solution for posting campus meeting notes + materials**—introduced at the October ISIT meeting is nearing completion and should be ready for use by spring semester. Committee documents + information will be put into the content management system. That will enable us to pull information into the InsideBC portal or to the BC website as needed. An example of the use of the content management system is the staff development website—brief information appears in the InsideBC portal with links to more information on the staff development website. Committee documents in the content management system will be sortable in alphabetical order and chronological order. Future versions might enable the contents of the documents to be searchable.

2. **Updated data from incoming Technology Request forms from the APR**—were reviewed by ISIT. Grant-funded requests will be separated out from those without outside funding. For the next two years at least, technology coming from general fund dollars probably won't happen. However, the grant-funded requests are not an automatic thing with ISIT blanket approval either. All groups going out for grants need to work with Information Services and Media Services to take into account the Total Cost of Ownership—all of the behind-the-scenes and personnel support expenses. Most grants enable the institution to purchase equipment as a test of its use or a jump start to improvements BUT the institution is expected to "institutionalize" the equipment after the grant runs out. That means BC would pick up the costs of maintaining and upgrading the technology after the grant runs out (usually within just a few short years). Does our grant approval process worked out by the College Council task force have that in mind. We know that there wasn't the long-term planning with Information Services for the technology purchased with the STEM grant.

   Another thing brought up with the review of the technology request form data is the need for the Information Services department's (with Media Services) technology request needs to occur after the processing of the other departments' technology requests since Information Services/Media Services bases their budget request on what the other

departments are requesting. That is something that will need to be worked out with Program Review on future iterations of the Annual Program Review process.

3. **National Distance Learning Week**—is this week (Nov 5–9). The Monday presentation "NASA Digital Learning Netowrk and STEM Programs" has been archived. Friday's webinar is "Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs)". See www.usdla.org/ndlw/ for login details.

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