

FACULTY SENATE MINUTES
SAM HOUSTON STATE UNIVERSITY

January 26, 2012
3:30 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.
LSC 304

Members Present:

Len Breen (COE), Donald Bumpass (COBA), Erin Cassidy (NGL), Kevin Clifton (CFAMC), Jeff Crane (CHSS), Donna Desforges (CHSS), Mark Frank (COBA), Randall Garner (CJ), Debbi Hatton (CHSS), Chad Hargrave (COS), Renee James (COS), William Jasper (COS), Gerald Kohers (COBA), Lawrence Kohn (COE), Drew Lopenzina (CHSS), Paul Loeffler (COS), Joyce McCauley (COE), Sheryl Murphy-Manley (CFAMC), Dwayne Pavelock (COS), Javier Pinell (CFAMC), Debbie Price (COE), Ling Ren (CJ), Tracy Steele (CHSS), Ricky White (COS), Pamela Zelbst (COBA)

Members Not Present:

Tracy Bilsing (CHSS), Doug Ullrich (COS)

Visitors: Bill Angrove and Jacob Spradlin of Delta. Tom Chasteen of Chemistry, David Burris of Computer Science Department

Called to order at 3:30 by Debbi Hatton

Approval of Minutes of December 1, 2011 meeting with minor corrections

Discussion of LMS: Committee and other reports were set aside for a thorough discussion of selecting a new LMS system for the university.

Chair Hatton opened with reassurance that the Senate would not take a vote on which LMS to adopt that day. A decision will have to be made by April 1, 2012.

Bill Angrove assured the Senate that the LMS decision would be made by the faculty. He agreed that the university should look at other LMS systems. In regard to hosting the new LMS system on campus as opposed to in the “cloud”, Angrove expressed a distinct preference for the “cloud”. He said that staffing and funding were already too expensive since Banner is hosted on campus to host an LMS system as well. He noted that at UT San Antonio they had spent \$800,000 in hardware alone just to host their LMS system.

Angrove agreed to bring in representatives from whichever LMS companies that the Senate and his office identified. Under discussion were:

1. "Desire2Learn"
2. Blackboard 9 (hosted or in the cloud)
3. Canvas (already presented to campus and Faculty Senate in early January)
4. "Coursekit" (Mark Frank submitted this system which was reported on in a NYT article)

It was noted that the university also had the choice of retaining E-College, one of the two current LMS programs in use on campus.

Delta agreed to organize vendors to come on campus, but reminded senators of the urgency to come to a decision since the current version of Blackboard in use on campus would end in the Summer of 2013.

In response to questions as to who had made the decision to host the LMS in the "cloud" rather than on campus, Angrove said that the Banner Steering Committee had made the decision not to host hard ware on campus.

Angrove noted that the contract with E-College goes through 2013, but it is exclusively for online courses. SHSU would have to stay with online courses on E-College through 2013. However, Angrove said that E-College representatives knew that SHSU was unhappy with the system and they were scheduled to visit the campus again soon. Overall, DELTA is unhappy with their failure to make requested fixes to their LMS system. DELTA staff believe that the E-College system is not capable of making the requested changes. Angrove prefers to go with one system for the entire university, including online and brick and mortar classes as soon as possible. Senator Loeffler commended Angrove and DELTA for leaving the decision on the LMS to the faculty.

There was a long discussion on the benefits of a hosting the hard ware on campus as opposed to continuing with a program in the "cloud". Again, Angrove stressed preference for the "cloud" and noted that the new Blackboard 9 (which is quite different apparently from the system currently in use on campus) does not work as well when hosted by on campus hard ware compared to when it is hosted in the "cloud". Furthermore, Angrove noted that Blackboard is very expensive. You have to pay for a suite and all the licensing associated with it. They did not know the actual cost, but numbers of up to 1.5 million per year were mentioned if SHSU were also paying for the infrastructure.

Angrove discussed his preference for Canvas which is newer than any other LMS program currently available and has better technology behind it. Also of importance, the pricing model for Canvas is much cheaper – approximately \$11 per student FTE. With

an estimated 17,000 students, it would cost the university approximately \$170,000 as opposed to what the university is paying to use E-College and Blackboard which is currently running approximately \$42 per student. There followed discussion as to why Canvas was marketing itself at such a lower rate and it was suggested that Canvas banked on getting all universities in the United States to use their product which will lower their costs in the long term. Angrove noted that Canvas runs on the Amazon.com network which also saves them considerable money.

Angrove noted that other LMS companies will probably study the Canvas model and programming system and catch up with them which means that in two years or so, there could be other good LMS options available in the marketplace. The hosted model LMS would probably have a five year contract as opposed to Blackboard which has an annual contract and the licensing fees have gone up each year. Jacob Spradlin of DELTA noted that it was not the cost of the current Blackboard system that was pushing SHSU to another LMS, but rather than Blackboard 8 would no longer get support from the company since they are focused on Blackboard 9. Spradlin agreed with Angrove that Blackboard 9 is completely different from Blackboard 8. In regard to E-College, Spradlin noted that it was changing also. The currently E-College LMS was dated and the company was moving to "Open Class". Although the company would keep E-College which may be free eventually, it still would not be a perfect system and would get little support from the company whose focus would be on its new LMS. In a few years, SHSU might have to use its own API and programmers to make E-College work.

In response to a question on what hesitations Angrove himself might have about moving to Canvas, he said that it was a new company and did not have a track record. On the positive side, he noted that Canvas appears to be intuitive. It has a number of attractive features such as the ability to record audio and video messages at the computer without real player or anything else. He and DELTA staff who have tried out Canvas were impressed with its many other features also including its gradebook, calendar tool, the grading rubric and outcome assessment. Faculty from the College of Education indicated that they were particularly interested in the outcome assessment tool. Presently students have to pay an additional \$100 in Education for access to the EK 20 assessment program. Canvas would negate that requirement.

Senators asked Jacob Spradlin to share with the Faculty Senate any reviews that they may have come across in their research of the various LMS systems or their own assessment and he agreed.

Spadlin expanded on the need to replace E-College even though some faculty and colleges at SHSU are satisfied with it. According to Spradlin, and seconded by Senators familiar with the issues, Math, Business and Science courses are not well suited to E-College. The manpower and money necessary to provide support to E-

College to make it possible for Math, Business and Science (work arounds) to function in E-College is prohibitive. E-College has proved unable or unwilling to fix these issues which have been brought to their attention. Promises were made by E-College representatives to fix the problems, but it was noted that E-College probably had its programmers working on a new LMS rather than trying to fix the old system.

Senator McCauley requested that the transition to whichever LMS is adopted be incremental so that professors who wished, could continue to work with E-College through 2013. It was then noted that the transition probably would not be seamless. Angrove acknowledged that the transition would have to be in an organized manner, but the decision had yet to be made on whether it would be by college or by professor. That could be decided later, but he said that it was important to start transferring Blackboard classes first since there was a definitely deadline that needed to be met. Some faculty preferred that the transition be by class – selected faculty users like Tom Chasteen from Chemistry who utilizes the LMS in his courses and was an early evaluator of the programs for the university in the early days of such system – should try them out first. That would require that the university purchase licensing on an ad hoc basis. There was additional discussion of Blackboard 9. Could SHSU go to Blackboard 9 as an interim choice if necessary? Apparently Blackboard purchased webct and incorporated many of its features into their program.

Discussion returned to whether or not the university should host the hardware for the LMS system on campus or in the “cloud”. Tom Chasteen with support of other faculty would like the Banner Steering Committee to reconsider its decision about not hosting hardware on campus. Debate followed about the pros and cons of leaving the “cloud” and it was noted that saving the millions necessary for purchase hard ware for on campus hosting could allow the university to put saved funds into other programs or testing. The question was posed as to whether SHSU wanted to dedicate the sources necessary to keep processing on campus. Many faculty members do not necessarily mind if it is hosted on campus or in the “cloud” so long as an LMS is intuitive and works (which means that faculty evaluations do not suffer from mishaps that occur when the LMS has problems). DELTA said that we could definitely look at Blackboard 9 since it is the same program whether in the “cloud” or hosted on campus, but indicated that he did not think that the Banner Steering Committee would change its mind on hosting the hard ware on campus. Faculty advocates of hosting on campus noted that it would give SHSU security and a back up, but Angrove argues that it is too expensive and SHSU lacks the personnel.

David Burris spoke at length regarding his discussion with IT and the question of hosting a new LMS on campus. According to his findings, Burris said that SHSU already had sufficient hard ware to host a new LMS. Also, he had been told that the LMS is unrelated to Banner except that they must interface on grades. The problem

with “cloud” hosting was the lack of security and back up which left us at the mercy of the vendor. He noted that, if the internet connection is cut on campus, one can still work on campus (but not at home). He noted that the SHSU system was currently at risk since it is centered in one building. There followed further discussion of cost, staffing (It was noted that even before DELTA was created that IT had not put a great deal of staff and manpower into the LMS), and the term of contracts. What would happen to SHSU if we went with Canvas and it stopped paying its bills? In the end, Angrove respectfully disagreed on hosting LMS on campus as opposed to the cloud. He is, however, open minded about the process of selecting the new LMS and will accept proposals from Faculty Senate and his office will keep in touch with the Senate about any other systems that they may find in their research. Angrove admitted E-College had been a mistake which was appreciated by Senators. There followed additional input from Faculty about addressing quality of courses and the fact that companies are moving away from “cloud” hosted systems. The LMS discussion closed with a review of Canvas by a Faculty Senator who had had a “sandbox” set up for him to try it out. He reported that it was fairly intuitive, he did not feel that it required a huge learning curve for faculty to use it, but noted that there were a few items with which he was not pleased. It was agreed that DELTA would arrange for “expert” faculty and students to test these various systems.

Chair’s Report (presented by Chair-elect Steele):

It was noted that the Drop Date proposal which had been passed by the Senate in December would probably not be adopted by the Administration.

New Business:

Gerald Kohers discussed course rosters and uploading them into Excel from E-College (cannot be done) or from Banner (the problem is that Banner updates only once in the morning so the roster may not reflect changes). Kohers requested that the Faculty Senate leadership put to Provost Hebert a request for a quick link that would provide faculty with the name, rank, class, and major or minor of students in their classes.

Joyce McCauley raised the issue of untenured junior faculty teaching four classes even though they are on a 3/3 teaching load. They do NOT receive pay for the overload – it is viewed as service to their department. Another issue is online courses for untenured faculty; online courses usually have lower teacher evaluations than brick and mortar classes. Donna Desforges confirmed that CHSS has researched the issue of evaluations online and found that the outcome may vary by approximately .5 points. Dean de Castro is willing to consider adjusting FES numbers. Faculty Senate endorsed having Bill Angrove and Delta produce a White Paper on online evaluations. These issues were assigned to Faculty Affairs. Tracy Steele raised the issue that faculty who

are on the 3/3 track but actually teach 4/4 due to overloads should be given the option on their FES evaluation of selecting the higher number for research track versus teaching track.

Adjournment: 5:08 PM