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FACULTY SENATE FORUM (November 7, 2000)

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The Faculty Senate Fall Forum was held on November 7, 2000, in the Charleston-Mattoon Room in the MLK, Jr., Union from 2:00 to 4:00 p.m. Chair Tidwell called the meeting to order at 2:05 p.m. Senators in attendance: J. Allison, R. Benedict, J. Best, G. Canivez, J. Dilworth, C. Eberly, P. Fewell, B. Fischer, F. Fraker, N. Greer, R. Gruber, J. Tidwell, M. Toosi, B. Young, and A. Zahlan.

Senate Chair James Tidwell welcomed those in attendance and explained the format of the Forum. Three breakout sessions named below were convened at 2:15 p.m. in assigned rooms of the Union. Members of Faculty Senate acted as Facilitators and Recorders for the discussions. Each group met until 3:35 p.m. Participants then reconvened in the Charleston-Mattoon Room and reported on their discussions. The report of each discussion is summarized below along with the names of the Facilitator and the Recorder. Chair Tidwell announced that the Council on Academic Affairs, the Council on Graduate Studies, and the University Professionals of Illinois co-sponsored the Forum with Senate. UPI will also hold a forum next Tuesday, November 14, to discuss intellectual property rights, workload compensation, and evaluation of on-line courses, which are contractual issues. Two other task forces are operating on campus dealing with the approval of online courses. The first is the Taskforce on the Electronic Delivery of Education (TEDE). The second, chaired by Dean Augustine, is working on a model infrastructure for delivery of technology. Tidwell read excerpts from a document by Arthur Levine, President of Teacher's College, Columbia University, ("The Future of Colleges: 9 Inevitable Changes", *Chronicle of Higher Education*, Oct. 27, 2000, p B-10) prior to starting the breakout sessions. Levine wrote that

three basic types of colleges are emerging. They are "brick universities," or traditional residential institutions; "click universities," or new, usually commercial virtual universities,...and "brick and click" universities, a combination of the first two. If current research on e-commerce is correct, the most competitive and attractive higher-education institutions will be "brick and click." While consumers appreciate the convenience, ease, and freedom of services on line, they also want a physical space where they can interact with others and obtain expert advice and assistance face-to-face. ... Colleges engage in teaching, research and service, yet teaching is the only function that is usually thought of as profitable. Research, like college football, brings in dollars for only a small number of institutions. Service, by its very nature, it is not remunerative....How do we protect research and service? An institution that engages only in those functions is not financially viable, but one that engages only in teaching may be intellectually impoverished. How can we head off the potential unbundling, for the benefit not only of colleges but also of the nation?....Faculty members will become increasingly independent of colleges and universities. The most renowned faculty members, those able to attract tens of thousands of students in an international marketplace, will become like rock stars. It is only a matter of time before we see the equivalent of an academic William Morris Agency.

Chair Tidwell announced the three breakout sessions and their room assignments. They were: Technology Support: Infrastructure and Instructional Design, Mori Toosi as Facilitator and Gary Canivez as Recorder (Charleston-Mattoon); Approval, Assessment and Evaluation of On-line Courses, Reed Benedict as Facilitator and Jean Dilworth as Recorder (Kansas); and The Role of Technology in the Eastern Mission, French Fraker as Facilitator and Ann Zahlan as Recorder (Paris). Flip charts were available in each room to list comments. Eberly announced that he needed the recorders' comments by 8:00 p.m. Tuesday evening so he could distribute minutes to faculty members by Friday morning, November 10, 2000.

Alan Barharlou: Would Senate please report on the progress of last year's forum and disseminate it to the campus? Tidwell agreed to do so. Groups went to breakout sessions at 2:15 pm. The general group reconvened at 3:40 p.m. in the Charleston-Mattoon Room. Chair Tidwell remarked that each group had 25-30 participants. He asked for each recorder to report on the discussion in their session. Recorders' reports are in the form they were submitted to Eberly for distribution.

Session I, Technology Support (Gary Canivez, Recorder):

The breakout session on technology stimulated discussion on numerous points. One issue that emerged was that of the need for a technology plan that incorporates developing, planning, and installing upgrades in the network infrastructure as well as with an organizational structure that would address technology needs for academic uses. It was suggested that there needs to be more centralization of services with a director of Academic Computing linked to the VPAA/Provost to address academic needs of technology while decentralization was suggested in some cases to augment the services provided by allowing faculty to do more on their own. This would require providing information necessary to accomplish tasks. For example, computer hardware and software installation may not always have to be provided by an ITS staff person. There are many faculty members on campus that have the expertise to be able to do their own installations of hardware and software. Other needs included personal support for helping faculty to learn to use technology more effectively through training. EIU has significant challenges with regard to technology due to inadequate funding and limited staff, as it is difficult to hire and retain technology specialists in the Charleston area. With respect to Web based instruction, it was suggested that we presently have potential to move in this direction but that the development of a Web based course is at least a three semester commitment for planning, design, development, and pilot testing. What is needed also is knowledge of the students' capabilities for interacting with the Web based/enhanced course. Web courses were indicated as always a "work in progress" due to changing technologies as well as hardware and software support. They are also reportedly time and labor intensive for the faculty involved with them. Several Web based courses are presently available at EIU and it was suggested that those who developed them should be available to be resources for those wanting to develop such a course to share their experiences. Technology limitations at EIU were discussed in relation to the present Token Ring based network but that newly renovated buildings are provided with Ethernet network capabilities. Presently EIU has most buildings using a Token Ring technology but there are some using Switched Ethernet, Unswitched Ethernet, and ATM network technologies. The present plan is to upgrade buildings one at a time to Ethernet when they are renovated or when new buildings are built. Although costly, it was suggested that it would be desirable to make the upgrade to 100 Based Ethernet for all buildings. It was suggested that a request to the IBHE and Legislature for additional monies to make a major upgrade of EIU's network would be helpful.

Comments after Canivez' Summary: Tidwell: No one from student affairs or external relations is in attendance here today. They also need to be doing some of the same things. If we create this unit, other people will want its services. Administrative computer services should be a separate entity. Jane Lasky: Is any part of our difficulty because we are on the token ring? Answer: No, that has never been an issue. Were you talking about technology-delivered education, or technology-enhanced education? Canivez: We focused on web-based education. We need to focus on the different types of technology related educational forms. Tidwell: It is not all web-based; some of it is in digital format via radio/tv.

Session II: Approval, Assessment and Evaluation of On-line Courses (Jean Dilworth, Recorder):

The members of the group who had taught on-line courses reported the following observations:

On line courses offer–

More personal student information as students write what they would not tell in a traditional classroom setting.

More writing is done by students and faculty member.

On-line courses require considerable more of the faculty member's time.

There is greater discourse among students and between students and faculty member.

Class size is an issue. What is too large? What is too small?

Approval issues were discussed.

The group did not agree whether CAA, CGS, COTE, or other committees should or would approve those on-line courses already being offered when the content of the course has previously been approved.

It was questioned if the representative committee members would have on-line experience. Would it be appropriate for the appointees to have the experience on-line teaching?

The question was raised as to who defined distance learning, technology enhanced, technology implementation.

The group agreed that Eastern has a strong tradition of excellent teaching quality and that should not be jeopardized by emphasis on the latest technology. However, on-line courses are definitely part of the future.

Assessment discussed

Quality would be determined by course content and course objectives.

Ways of determining quality could be reviewed by other comparable universities successes.

Technology should be the “non-visible” part of the course. Not technology just for the sake of having an on-line course.

If and when technology is available what will be the expectations placed on students and faculty?

Evaluations reported

One faculty member reported that the chair observed the on-line class instruction the same as would be done in the traditional classroom.

Technology may need to be separated from other evaluations of the faculty member. Power failure is not under the faculty member’s control but does result in less than satisfactory student approval. Can students separate technology from course content?

The same student evaluations were used as were used for traditional classes.

Tests were a lower percentage of the total grade for on-line courses.

Participation in class was easily documented and could be referred at a later time.

Traditional semester beginnings and endings could change.

Tests and other assignments were password protected.

Student honesty is not completely controlled for writing assignments in traditional classes, on-line courses are not more subject to this concern.

Costs of the on-line courses will need to be determined and supported. Those costs should not erode technology in on campus classes and computer labs.

Whatever the costs and the implementation there was agreement that using the on-line technology for students is preparing them for the work place. Therefore, student learning is enhanced.

There was discussion that learning that takes place in the traditional classroom that involves “non-content” course objectives, for example role modeling and face-to-face interaction.

The group seemed to agree that there were content areas, courses and perhaps some programs that would not be appropriate for on-line delivery.

This group had a clear indication of who would be the priority target market. Those alumni that are in the teaching profession and would gladly take on-line courses for certification, re-certification and additional degrees.

- Jean Dilworth

Session III: Role of Technology in the Eastern Mission (Anne Zahlan, Recorder):

Moderator French Fraker provided participants with copies of the E.I.U. mission statement, and the statement served as the basis for discussion:

Eastern Illinois University offers superior yet accessible undergraduate and graduate education. Students learn the methods and outcomes of free inquiry in the arts, sciences, humanities, and professions guided by a faculty known for its commitment to teaching research-creative activity, and service. The University community strives to create an educational and cultural environment in which students refine their abilities to reason and to communicate clearly so as to become responsible citizens in a diverse world. Eastern should use technology in ways that reinforce and enhance the “accessible” and “superior” education” that we offer. Computer technology can make an EIU education more accessible, but there are concerns about maintaining the superior quality of our teaching in the online world.

Discussion of what kind of technological skills our graduates should have mastered led to agreement that curriculum need not be concerned with basic “button-pushing” skills that are subject to constant change. Rather, university faculty must ensure that students can evaluate sources and distinguish good information from bad in the online context. Critical thinking must be applied to computer-delivered information as well as to that available in print.

For disciplined and motivated graduate students, on-line learning can be an ideal means of building upon or updating skills and knowledge. Accessible online education can encourage increased participation in “life-long education.” There was, however, concern about whether Eastern could offer courses and especially degree programs wholly online and still maintain “superior” education. Group members agreed that personal contact and face-to-face instruction were important to Eastern’s strength and reputation in teaching. Many were concerned that by running after online instruction (and the dollars rumored to be available for it), Eastern could weaken existing courses, cannibalize resources, and lose our traditional niche. Although we cannot remain “all-brick,” trying to become “all-click” would be disastrous.

The reference to “community” in the mission statement prompted support for maintaining the Eastern spirit of community as well as observations that online courses and communication can greatly enlarge and expand the university, both geographically and in terms of diversity. On a campus that is not as diverse as many, we can compensate for a relatively homogeneous student body by accessing international information and establishing international contacts on the web.

Concerned about the scarcity of financial support, participants agreed that the university should focus on enhancing existing campus courses with technology rather than diverting resources to online delivery. Our classrooms are technologically impoverished, and the university’s priority should be to serve current courses and current students. Making use of technology is time-consuming, and it is necessary to provide time as well as equipment for faculty to prepare web materials and keep them current. Deciding which courses (and programs) Eastern will offer online should be based on market research as to who would take them. We should not duplicate offerings at other schools, and we should not try to compete in technology with research universities or community colleges, that are funded at higher levels than E.I.U. Courses should be designed in fields and subjects that Eastern already does well. We should build on our existing strengths and reputation. In order to make the best use of material and human resources, we should cooperate with other Illinois universities in designing virtual curricula. --Anne Zahlan

Adjournment (Toosi), 4:10 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
Charles G. Eberly, Recorder