CLASSROOM ADVISORY SUBCOMMITTEE
MINUTES OF MEETING
MAY 5, 2008

[In these minutes: Computing Solutions for Collaborative Learning Spaces on Campus, Active Learning Classrooms Pilot Evaluation, Classroom and Informal Learning Space Resolution Discussion Continued]

[These minutes reflect discussion and debate at a meeting of a committee of the University of Minnesota Senate; none of the comments, conclusions or actions reported in these minutes represent the views of, nor are they binding on, the Senate, the Administration or the Board of Regents.]

PRESENT: Ken Heller, chair, Steve Fitzgerald, Roberta Juarez, Jay Hatch, Larren Collins, James Hambleton, Eric Otremba

REGRETS: Caroline Rosen, Michael Berthelsen, Jeffrey Lindgren, Thomas Michaels, Kay Wahl,

ABSENT: Jeffrey Hammer, Bernard Gulachek, Tina Louise Tyler

GUESTS: Steve Carnes, Simin Hickman, Linda Jorn, John Knowles, Jane Phillips, Aimee Whiteside

OTHERS ATTENDING: Mike Garza

I). Professor Heller called the meeting to order, and asked those present to introduce themselves.

II). Professor Heller stated that at the request of Jane Phillips and Simin Hickman the first agenda item will be a discussion about computing solutions for collaborative learning spaces on campus. He turned to Jane Phillips to provide background information on this item.

At issue, noted Ms. Phillips, is who should be responsible for providing computers and computing support in the new general-purpose active learning classrooms on campus. Possible scenarios for consideration:
- Require students to provide their own laptops.
- Develop a pattern of support for the technology in these classrooms that would involve the Office of Classroom Management (OCM), Office of Information Technology (OIT), Central Security, and the colleges/departments that use these classrooms.
- Hardware and software support would be supplied by OIT.
- Central Security could supply fiber optic security to keep computers in these rooms secure from theft, and, also, have Central Security control door access via UCard/SmartCard access.

- Make colleges/departments responsible for purchasing any software licenses for specialty software and providing the software to OIT a minimum of two weeks before needed, and preferably before the semester begins.

Potential issues associated with some of these scenarios were discussed.

Professor Heller suggested running any specialized software off a web-based virtual computer. Steve Fitzgerald concurred and stated that the active learning classrooms are predicated on the premise that students have a personal computing device, e.g. browser equipped cell phone, PDA, laptop. He added that this issue goes beyond the active learning classrooms; interfacing personal computing devices throughout the campus needs to be addressed. From a general-purpose classroom perspective, looking into the future when personal computing devices will be ubiquitous, the question of how to get the campus to this point is central to this issue. The challenge for the institution will be to interface personal computing devices in ways that are consistent and user-friendly across the campus.

Professor Heller proposed creating a University standard for a web-based operating system so most common configurations of laptops and operating systems are able to log in, and any specialized software can reside there. A web-based operating system looks exactly like a person's desktop.

As the University strives to become one of the top three research institutions in the world, noted Mr. Fitzgerald, today's discussion has non-trivial funding implications. At some point the institution needs to address the strategic issue, which is how to interface personal computing devices across the campus. Having said this, today's discussion is not under the purview of OCM, but rather this discussion centers around campus-wide computing solutions.

Steve Carnes on behalf of Associate Vice President Ann Hill Duin, associate vice president, stated that OIT is ready, willing and able to take the lead on this issue given its enterprise nature. Professor Heller asked for the OIT timeframe in terms of determining whether a web-based operating system is a feasible solution to dealing with the computing issues being discussed today. Mr. Carnes stated that he is not in a position to answer this question, but that he is in a position to say that Ann Hill Duin is committed to working with OCM and other necessary groups to resolve this issue. Mr. Fitzgerald reminded the group that what is being talked about today is a campus solution to a computing issue and not a classroom solution. Standard solutions that would benefit all faculty and students make more sense than classroom-based, college-based, or department-based solutions.

Mr. Carnes stated that he would relay today's discussion to Associate Vice President Hill Duin and make sure she understands that this is a priority. He stated that he is not able to make any promises having to do with timelines, especially with EFS; OIT has been very taxed with EFS-related work. Mr. Carnes stated that OIT would report its findings to CAS once it has investigated the proposed web-based operating system as a possible solution for the larger computing issue.

Ms. Phillips thanked the committee for taking up this issue.

III). The next agenda item, noted Professor Heller, is the Active Learning Classrooms (ALC) Pilot Evaluation. Aimee Whiteside, research evaluation specialist, Digital Media Center (DMC), distributed copies of the 2007 findings and recommendations from this evaluation.

In the summer of 2007, OCM invited the DMC to evaluate the active learning classrooms. In response to this request, an Active Learning Pilot Evaluation Team was formed. The evaluation team identified four questions it would use to evaluate these classrooms:

1. What are faculty attitudes and expectations for the new learning spaces as they start the semester? Do their attitudes and expectations change over the term, and are the fulfilled?
2. How do students perceive the new spaces? Are they comfortable in the new arrangements? How do the new spaces affect their relations with their classmates? With their instructors?
3. How are the technologies used both from faculty and student perspectives? What teaching/learning strategies were used, and how did the rooms facilitate or inhibit those strategies?
4. In what ways did the physical features, such as seating, sightlines, lighting, ventilation, acoustics, and power affect teaching and learning? Did faculty make any adjustments in their teaching approach specifically in light of room design/function? If so, what was learned? If not, would they be willing to make adjustments of various sorts?

Next, Ms. Whiteside shared the methodologies used for evaluating these classrooms with the committee.

Findings:

- Instructor attitudes towards these classrooms were overall very positive. Instructors noted that the active learning classrooms immediately changed the learning experience for students. Specific comments from instructors regarding these classrooms were shared with the committee.

- Students also voiced very positive comments regarding the active learning classrooms. They indicated feeling more connected to their instructor, and particularly more connected to their classmates. These rooms, noted students, are tremendously effective for teamwork and collaborative projects.

- In response to the question dealing with learning technologies, instructors and students agreed that ALCs create an environment where learning can occur easily. Instructors also noted that these rooms are already pre-designed for collaboration, which serves to minimize their prep time. Student display screens, the round

tables, document cameras, and glass marker boards were considered the most
important features of the ALCs.

- In terms of the physical features of these classrooms, quantitative data from the
  student questionnaire regarding the ALCs was very positive overall. Both
  instructors and students offered a number of comments, suggestions and
  recommendations to help improve these learning spaces.

Based on the key findings from this preliminary data, the ALC Pilot Evaluation Team
made the following recommendations for future classrooms:
- Consider space issues for coats and other personal items when the tables are at
  full capacity.
- Continue to promote a campus-wide awareness of the ALCs to the faculty as well
  as key administrators and support staff members.

Mr. Fitzgerald stated that this is a great report. The collaboration between the DMC and
OCM as it relates to ALCs has been extremely positive. Members of CAS agreed and
thought it would be interesting to expand upon this evaluation of ALCs overtime.

IV). Members spent the remainder of the meeting discussing next steps for the classroom
space resolution it intends to bring to SCEP, SCFP and eventually the Senate. The intent
of the resolution, noted Professor Heller, is to articulate the need for getting away from
piece-meal classroom planning, and taking classrooms off-line without sufficient
replacements in the inventory.

Professor Heller proposed that at least a small contingency of CAS members meet with
Bob McMaster, vice provost and dean for undergraduate education, and Bob Kvavik,
associate vice president, Office of Planning, to garner their input before finalizing this
resolution. Renee Dempsey, Senate staff, stated that she is working to identify a date
when this meeting can take place. She expects to know more within the next day or two
and will notify members via email.

Hearing no future business, Professor Heller adjourned the meeting.

Renee Dempsey
University Senate