ITCO Minutes 9-07-09

Present: Linda Meyer, Judith Garrison, Samantha Birk, Steve Carr, Gail Rathbun
Absent: Tiff Adkins, Joseph McCormick, Sue Mau, no student reps
Also present: Bob Kostrubanic, for Joseph McCormick

1. ITCO Contribution to the ITS Strategic Plan
   Bob said that the goal is to have ITS strategic plan finished by the end of the semester. The plan will span 3 years. An outside consultant has made suggestions for significant changes in the plan and Bob is to have a new draft completed early next week. Then work will start again on the plan. The plan will conform to the IPFW Strategic Plan.

   Bob requested clarification on some of the bullet points from the summary he had made of the ITCO recommendations, provided to ITPC April 15. We started with Point 1: Provide technology support a. Real-time 24/7 support via a variety of methods. Bob stated that ITS is considering a contract with IHETS which will perform automated monitoring and alerts for Blackboard Vista. He also stated that ITS has hired students to monitor systems 24 hours a day and to send an alert or take action when there is trouble that must be addressed immediately.

   The ITCO members emphasized the importance of coordination and communication among ITS units, citing recent examples when this did not take place when Blackboard went down, and the importance of communication with the users. ITCO further emphasized “meeting the user on the ground where they are at.” ITCO encouraged Bob to study how people actually use Blackboard and other technologies for teaching. Bob said that he would welcome having this sort of information and suggested that ITCO conduct a study of faculty and students to answer these questions.

   Linda Meyer suggested that the response from the Helpdesk with regard to helping her get wireless working in the HHS Dean’s office last week was inadequate. ITS has had the wireless vendor in to examine what is wrong with the system and ascertained that it is not the system. He hypothesizes that it may be stray RF signals.

   Bob listed some of the projects related to instruction that ITS is working on. ITS is starting to help upgrade departmental labs. The major impetus for the upgrades is accreditation. He mentioned that in the case of the VPA labs, it took a critical newspaper article to get the funding to upgrade them. Finding the funding to help the labs stay current is the challenge.

   Gail asked why classroom technologies upgrades for the older equipment in many of the installed classrooms was not on the list. Bob said that he had forgotten to put that on the list of projects.

   Bob said that there is $1.8 million in student technology fees. A large portion of the ITS budget is spent to keep up licenses for all of the student labs. Bob stated several times that there was little left in the budget, if anything, for the purchase and operation of additional technologies beyond what is already in place.
Bob stated that the Deans and other high level administrators do not know what instructional technology projects are going on in their schools and colleges. This was discussed at an AOC meeting.

Discussion moved to the following point. (IT=Instructional Technology)
“Point 2: Support for Instructional Technology review/assessment/coordination process
.. a. Survey, evaluate, cost current/evolving ITs
.. b. Create/communicate process to evaluate and guide IT considerations
.. c. Budget for approved ITs
.. d. Create R&D budget for developing ITS skills/products
.. e. Align ITS Strategic Plan organize with IFPW Strat Plan org”

Sam noted Bob’s frequent lament that he does receive requests from faculty with regard to instructional technology, and stated that the “Service Request” form tends to make requests look like separate requests rather than pieces of an entire project to accomplish a significant goal, for example, like facilitating the faculty’s ability to format and place of time-based media in a secure, reliable environment that insures compliance with the TEACH act. Bob later stated that he has a request in for a full-time position called Video Analyst to develop and direct all video activities on this campus, including the video security cameras.

Linda Meyer said that it was well-known that the campus needs a program-course evaluation system that can be delivered in an online environment. Indeed, faculty were involved in the review and selection process of a course evaluation system. The system that was recommended was too expensive ($100,000). The system that was purchased ($20,000) was not suitable for our needs. The cost of the system would be the responsibility of Academic Affairs.

One of the projects on the ITS list is improving the service request process. Bob’s proposed process is in two parts. The first part is “Issue Management” which allows the request to be studied in a broad general way, and the second is more detailed. Bob showed a flow chart of the process and said that the weak part of the current process is the project assignment. Bob would also like to provide a way in which the requestor can independently track the progress of the request. ITCO asked Bob to email Gail a copy of the flow chart.

ITCO members commented that: 1) few faculty, chairs, deans know about the service request process, and 2) the format of the service request is not well-adapted to the shape, structure, and rationales of a request for instructional technology. Bob suggested that ITCO come up with a service request format that would be better suited to instructional technology projects.

2. How do we make ITCO matter?
The committee discussed the role of ACITAS in providing advice to ITS on information technology matters. ACITAS was formed when there were no instructional technology positions such as those in CELT and in Distance Learning. The committee has not played an active role in advising ITS. ITCO was set up as a sub-committee to ITPC and charged with:

the responsibility to develop and implement plans for the use, support, and evaluation of instructional technologies at IPFW in order to facilitate and
improve the process of teaching and learning for a diverse community of faculty and students. Modeled in part on the successful Distance Education Coordinating Council (DECCO), ITCO will bring together faculty users and providers to plan for and coordinate the delivery of effective instructional technologies at IPFW (Dr. Hannah’s ITCO charter to ITPC).

Bob suggested that ITCO could provide the information that the members of AOC are seeking. Gail suggested that it could be ITCO’s role to help re-activate ACITAS by asking its members for specific input or by involving it in specific instructional technology projects.

Gail asked Bob to send her a budget for instructional technologies, including the upgrading of the classroom technologies mentioned earlier. (An overview of instructional technology projects that CELT has been working on is attached.)

Steve Carr submitted a service request for the media streaming system described in the drawing attached. NOTE: ITS has since responded to set a meeting, and it is reported that Bob has brought the sketch to Walt Branson.

3. We will need to find a replacement for Linda Meyer, who is retiring, starting with the Spring 2010 semester.

Fall 2009 Meeting Schedule
October 6  3-4:30 ET 206
November 10  10:30-12:00  SB 176
Dec. 8  3-4:30  ET 206
1. Video Streaming
I am seeing about a 60-70% jump over last year in requests for digitizing media in order to make these streaming media files available to students in support of teaching. Currently we have about 500 video files saved on the MMS server, which only supports .WMV format. This number is growing very, very fast. The Mark Franke project for Freshman aside [Mark Franke requested that CELT publish the content of a DVD designed for FYE teachers to use in their courses], we have taken in 4 projects this week alone, 3 of which involve the development of 15+ unique video files. This growth does not include the expanding number of media files that faculty are simply uploading directly into the Blackboard file managers to make more directly available to students. The media items these faculty are posting vary in formats, though my sense is that most are .MOV/MP4, a format which our server does not support. As we know, having this level of direct access to the media has repercussions with IPFW’s compliance with copyright and TEACH Act guidelines because these files can be downloaded and distributed. For this reason, it is imperative that ITS finish work on two elements of the Helix server project, a project that has dragged on for several years now.

The video streaming project started out in support of distance learning, but I am seeing faculty teaching face-to-face courses utilizing streaming media in a variety of ways—everything from play in class and making it available to review, to "off-loading" the playing of the video during class time as a homework or pre-class prep, and everything in between.

Also, I am increasingly getting requests from other parts of the institution to stream video—everything from the Chancellor’s office with the Remnant Trust exhibition, to URC, to Career Services, SOAR and beyond.

2. iTunes U and podcasting
Based on emails, phone calls, and the meetings I have had since faculty returned to campus, I am hearing more and more Deans, Chairs, and Faculty members interested in what iTunes U can do for them to support teaching, help stay connected to their faculty AND the desire in a small area to empower students to publish content. Some of what I am hearing could be facilitated and made much, much easier with Apple’s Podcast Publisher to help manage the work flows. Here are some of the ideas I have hearing:

The project for URC is more or less specific to them since it wants to utilize the Apple Xserve server that they currently have and is directed at helping them to more easily take content that is already being captured by units such as CATV and make it available as public content on iTunesU. It is the
consistent publication of this type of content that will get us listed in the iTunes Music Store under iTunes U. If done fairly soon, it would make us the 1st mid-west school in our broader area to accomplish this (good PR fodder), and based on statistics from Apple, we would should see an almost 700% jump in traffic from outside of our institution to our iTunes U site just based on people around the world doing searches on the iTunes Music store. Once we are listed in the store--all of our current and future content and meta data gets indexed.

From my view what I see is that we need to "institutionalize" iTunes U. Currently ALL requests for classes, etc. in iTunes U come to me. To execute each of these requests I must ask ITS to add someone to the "iTunesU eDirectory container" so they have the ability upload their files. I even hand-build each and every faculty's class in iTunesU!

To meet this growing demand we need to really develop a streamlined way for faculty to request an account and class be generated in iTunes (maybe similar to how classes are created in Blackboard?), attention needs to be given to the scripting that governs these permissions, and I think we need to very seriously (and quickly) consider implementing Podcast Producer in support of all the non-URC stuff...faculty with class, chairs with faculty meetings, deans with school addresses, etc.

The thing with iTunes and the podcasting is that it is not only driving podcast creation, which can be done really very simply with computers, mics, and Audacity, but it is starting to quickly branch out to the use of hand-held devices and how web apps, locally developed apps, books, and podcasts all come together. Nursing is pretty much all the way with moving their recommendations to students from having Palm hand-helds to iTouch/iPhone. Keep in mind that all undergraduate and graduates in this program are required to have these hand-held devices currently. The reason for the move from Palm to iTouch is being driven and the HUGE number of medial-specific apps available on the iTouch.

Geosciences is looking at actually developing apps for the iTouch to support some of their traditional classes, as well as their filed class. With Tammy Toscos on board in Nursing they are probably right behind them. There is a Dean who is interested in supporting faculty with investigating the use of hand-holds ranging from designing for them to using them to deliver content (VPA/VCD).

3. Lecture capture in the classrooms

Of the 3 this is probably the least pressing, meaning is it not really roaring like a freight train, more like a slow sail on a yacht--but it does partner will with the first 2. It has been about 2 years since Distance Learning/IPFW "bought into" this great deal with Echo 360 to lecture capture classes, provide links to the media which can then be added to a Blackboard Vista course for students to access. Eric Vitz uses this extensively in the delivery of Distance Courses, and my understanding is that Echo 360
is used in all the distance classrooms, except KT 227--the Executive MBA classroom, which uses Media Site.

In conclusion, if ITS would really get behind #1 & 2 and make them priority projects like they do the myIPFW portal, Banner and any of the other "business" applications, the potentials they offer to faculty is pretty darn big. Currently the Helix server is on the ITS list of projects, and until this week, was not a priority for completion.