TLTR Meeting – 3/10/09

In attendance: Barney Norwick, Michael Ciri, Marnie Chapman, Kathy DiLorenzo, Bryan Hitchcock, Grant Rich, Elise Tomlinson, Colleen McKenna, Denise Blankenship

Guests: Provost James Everett, Registrar Barbara Hegel

Provost James Everett:

James Everett attended to briefly discuss the charge of the TLTR committee relative to institutional need. He expressed his concern about what the committee is, what it focuses on, and what it produces. A full transcript is attached.

Registrar Barbara Hegel:

Barbara Hegel attended to discuss the problems involved with sending postcards to all distance students as they register for classes.

Barbara Hegel received a memo from the provost's office saying that the postcard project had been approved and that the registrar's office could move forward with it. Barbara said that she had only had brief discussions with the committee about the project and that her office was not prepared to move forward with it. Problems include:

- Who will create the postcards?
- Who is paying for postage?
- What's the timeline for getting this out?
- How can it be automated?
- Mailing addresses may not be current.

Statewide Banner workflow will soon send each student an email as they register for classes telling them how to get started. Emails will be sent to UA email addresses.

Elise said that this creates a problem for new students who are not aware of their UA email addresses. The idea behind the postcards would be to tell students where to go to get all of their information and how to log on.

Michael said that his group would also have to be involved in the process. Barbara said she's willing to do a piece of it, but that her staff can't take on the entire project.

Michael said that to move this forward, he is willing to work with Barbara. He said that the main goals of the postcard are to get students to go to ELMO, claim their account, and set up email forwarding. Somebody will have to pay for it, somebody will have to design it, and somebody will have to determine what the postcard needs to say. He says there are all kinds of technologies that could be used to automate it.

Marnie said they've been using Title 3 funds for postcards for a few years. She offered to share the Sitka postcard with the committee.

Michael will take it through administration to figure out how to get it moving. Barbara suggests involving the new distance coordinator, Tim Olson.

Transcript of Provost's charge to the committee:

Provost James Everett: This is the first time I've gone up to any podium and had Anselm Stack staring back at me. Not the best way to begin.

So I apologize for the insertion of this discussion to the committee proceedings, but I had not the chance to come in and talk to the group.   So I'll get right to the point.

I've spent a little bit of time -- a fair amount of time -- having our office look at the relationship between this committee and Senate, the relationship between this committee and the Provost office, and the basic charge of this committee relative to the institutional need. And obviously, on the latter point, there are lots of different interpretations of "institutional need" so I will need your patience with my particular cut at that. But I want to turn this back to you with the sense that when you come together next, which hopefully will be sooner than later, that you might be able to provide what I ask for in the course of this brief set of remarks.

One: I'm very concerned about what the committee is, what it focuses on, what it produces.

Two: I then, given that concern, look to see the extent of the prerogative of the Provost's Office from the perspective of the former Provost with regard to the committee and then the prerogative shared or direct of Academic Senate, which as all of you would know has various opinions not necessarily in align with mine about where the prerogatives for the institution exist. But, in the spirit of the effort to share the collective burden we have, I'm not so sure that's an essential piece of this discussion. However, the structural reality of the committee is that, while it does not report directly to Senate, it does have an obligation to inform Senate of its proceedings. But from Robbie's point of view, it was very much, and Michael has, and I guess several of you or all of you have more historical perspective than I have to offer, but Robbie's was specific in that her feeling was that the basic charge when the committee was formed in 2002 flowed from her understanding of what the committee could do, should do and would do.

Given all of that, I wanted to reassert the work of the committee to the Provost office. So that I guess is the first message here, which is that we ought to be working closely together.

The second message is that we are not engaged with contemporary practice institutionally with teaching and learning.

There are parts of the institution over the last nine months who have identified themselves with the following mantra: "we've never heard of this teaching and learning stuff until you got here." -- this costing me a one hour of very aggravated and contested discussion about whether such a thing ever existed.

So this suggests that the committee isn't working well, at least in terms of its output.

I'm offering this in more hyperbole than it needs to be but I want to have a sense that we can collectively drive some outcomes, particularly with respect to technology and what happens in our classrooms. And in the sense that we are not in a good position to talk about how we are going to engage technology in our classrooms when the focus of our accreditation will be on a specific arena for the next seven years -- and that's learning outcomes.

We are not in a good place.

We will finish in October the last cycle of our accreditation. In 2010, the subsequent year, we have to put into place a brand new look at revised standards for accreditation and then in 2011, by no later than September, this institution must produce another, relatively major, report that outlines the four key areas of the new cycle which is you show us the relationship between your mission, your vision (and there is no consensus on the vision for UAS as I have learned), the goals, and the outcomes that you are looking for. And the last two parts, the goals and the outcomes, first and foremost, have to be constructed around learning outcomes.

And so, in the new accreditation cycle, they will require that we report, in a seven year span versus a ten year span, twice -- and then they are going to send their teams down here twice. So the level of scrutiny for the claims that we make will move from the very prosaic that we now provide, which is largely this narrative, to a much more formalized inspection of our claims. And those claims for Kathy [DlLorenzo] will be "here's my course in Public Administration. Here's what they will have at the end of this, and here's how I measure that, and here's my performance on that." And that's a degree of difficulty in terms of the dive that we're making into accreditation that AACSB and business schools have had in place for a decade and we've never engaged with.

So all of this background suggests that there is an imperative for us to act sooner than later. There is an imperative, if we follow through with what Robbie and I suspect Michael given his longevity in the institution has worked on for a decade or more, in Robbie's case 20 years, the sense which brought me to UAS, which is that we have a pretty good understanding of how technology is going to get used in the classroom. And we are going to have to deliver on that, but to the extent that we are going to begin the much harder scrutiny about learning outcomes and then, by association, how technology influences those outcomes or detracts from them, there's nothing in place. I have nothing to report. And we have one year to begin an understand of how to develop it. So somehow simultaneously in concluding our nine standards for reporting in 2009, we have to then simultaneously engage and take some of that content into the more refined context of learning outcomes as the principle driver.

And, to me, coming from where I did, the integration of technology with learning outcomes is so fundamental these days, that I don't know how we can escape it. But, we don't have a strategic vision of that, we're not driving toward a strategic vision except perhaps in Michael's somewhat increasingly frowning face right now. We don't have a strategic agenda in place. So when I discuss some of these issues with Robbie, I say "where would that come from?" It can come from my head and no one will

accept it. It can come from Robbie's as a legacy that people can interpret. But where would you turn to have a strategic understanding, not only of a recognition that we're not engaging technology very well at this moment. We are, as Michael has said, in terms of how many of our faculty compared to Fairbanks are using their online learning systems. But Michael's refinement to that is "ok, they're up there, what do they do with it?" And how much of our resources are being spent to understand what our individual faculty are doing?

We're getting an increasing amount of pressure to move to a single learning management system across th system. And there is two competing pressures. One is that if the legislature continues to fund individual MAUs versus a system MAU, that will splinter the effort to move to a system-wide learning management system. But it will put directly in our campus, then, a decision about how to support the one that we've got, and hot to grow it, and how to, as best we can, achieve the integration across the other two MAUs.

Michael's delivered on that technological stuff, and adapted over time and done a great job, but at the end of the day, the strategic vision for that should come from a committee that combines academic resources with administrative resources. And when I look around.... [waves hands to indicate the group]

[Exchange between James and Michael Ciri regarding the role of the Assessment Committee and the historic tension between TLTR and faculty senate regarding long-term assessment.]

James: At the end of this, what I wanted to do today was to set in place a sense that: where's the strategic vision of the integration of learning resources in all of their forms -- one of which is the technologically based one -- where is that going to come from? One. Two: how are we going to integrate that? and I think that Michael has captured some of the tensions. How are we going to get this integrated at the institutional level? As long as this committee continue to have a strong relationship with the Provost's Office, I know how it can get there because I'll simply continue to assert the need for the agenda. But what I'm concerned about is where do we negotiate the initial cut at a strategic vision on how we look out on technology in all of its forms and our learning experience here? Where do we get the strategic vision for that and I'm offering that to you as an opportunity, I guess.

To start that discussion: I visited -- my Daughter is in a PhD program in Lake Forest Medical School -- and they no longer have this [waves hands over the broadcast technology podium]. In fact, the young woman who was teaching there thought it was quite striking that I was looking for the lecture podium and pointed out to me, "who uses lecture podiums?" [continues description of virtual dissection workstations used for teaching surgical incisions/dissections] I was startled and stunned that all of my experience had nothing to do with what they were taking as a standard mode of operation every time they walk into a classroom there.

Well that's one. Two: I came back here and looked at the Egan classrooms -- some of which are hard pressed to find an overhead projector for -- I assume -- people are still using -- [waves hands]

[TLTR members offer the term "transparencies" and respond that almost no UAS faculty use them]

Fair enough -- then I stumbled into one of the only classrooms that's archaic.

This is, to me, not so much as question of "do we resource it correctly?" but, "do we actually have a strategic understand of where we're headed with this that's not IT based?" That's based on the sense that we can combine this discussion between academics and administrators and come up with something meaningful.

Elise Tomlinson (TLTR co-chair): I appreciate what you're saying and I think that, actually, it's a much, much larger discussion than a five minute announcement. I appreciate the heads-up, and we'd love you to come to the next regularly scheduled meeting where we can have a bigger discussion about this and try to formalize what that might look like -- take it back to Faculty Senate and start that conversation about how we might...

James: There is no need to take it to Senate at this point.

Elise: Well, just as an informational thing about a potential redirection of this committee if the charge is changing, you know, because we want to keep everyone informed of what we're doing. So that, even if we don't report to Faculty Senate, as a common courtesy informational thing. However, since we only have about five more minutes in our meeting, I'd like the chance to listen to Barbara [Hegel].

James: So can I ask the Chairs to lead this then? You should consider these loose remarks so that when I come back, formally acting as the Provost evaluating the outputs and the nature of the committee, that you are prepared to address whether or not you are going to engage this idea of a strategic vision that's the initial cut at it -- not the final version, but an initial cut. Two: whether, in your view, this is an effective way to approach the relationship between the resources and learning outcomes at the University -- this committee. And, if it is, what the role of the committee is in that relationship. And none of those three questions are clear to me at this point -- as a challenge to you.