

Commission on Faculty Affairs
Minutes
March 6, 2015

Attending: Montasir Abbas, Rami Dalloul (Chair), Jack Davis, Jack Finney, Velva Groover, Wat Hopkins, Rodney Irvin, Drew Muscente, Wornie Reed, and Anne Zajac.

Guests: Scott Midkiff, VP for Information Technology & Chief Information Officer, and Dale Pike, Executive Director, TLOS, and Associate Provost

1. Announcement to approve and post the minutes from the February 6 and February 20 meetings. Those minutes have been posted on the CFA Scholar site.

Minutes from February 6th were approved.

2. Next generation learning management system (LMS): presentation by Scott Midkiff (VP Information Technology & Chief Information Officer) and Dale Pike (Executive Director, TLOS) followed by discussion. More information available at: <https://tlos.vt.edu/NextGenerationLMS/>

Pike began by explaining the history of Scholar and what TLOS is currently doing to select the next learning management system platform. In 2010, Scholar fully replaced Blackboard as a management system. In addition to courses, Scholar supports project sites, e-portfolios, and SPOT online. Scholar is probably viable for about 5 more years under its current structure but it is losing support. Over time, it is likely that Scholar will shift its focus to collaborative projects. As the new platform is being chosen, TLOS is seeking for a more seamless navigation process than that of Scholar. When using Scholar, it often takes many clicks to find information.

These key gaps and the viability have caused Virginia Tech to look into a different platform. TLOS is looking to have the new platform communicate across systems (e.g., social sites). Courses are becoming more demanding for this type of content to be included. Reporting results should also be easier with the new platform. Ideally, grades that are inputted into the new system should be connected with Banner.

As the new system is selected, TLOS is talking to numerous constituent groups throughout campus to understand the various needs and to diagnose where support will be needed when integrating the new data system. In order to select the next data system, TLOS will need to determine: What are the things that a new management system needs to do? How should those needs be prioritized? What would Virginia Tech like to accomplish with the new system?

Pike further explained that proof of concept is currently underway with the system Canvas. A group of faculty and students is using the system to determine if this is the new direction for Virginia Tech to take. Prior to selecting this system, TLOS looked at which other institutions are using this system and some of the reviews. Midkiff is one of the professors using Canvas. He

explained to CFA members that it is more modern and has a better user design. Canvas is better at linking rubrics to learning outcomes. Midkiff explained that Canvas is a good platform for teaching and learning, but perhaps may not be the right platform for collaborative projects. This system can integrate with other external tools (e.g., Google Apps for education).

CFA members asked how many faculty members across campus and disciplines are using Canvas. Pike explained that currently there are additional pressures (e.g., increasing class sizes), but they have tried to select participants who represent the needs of different communities. However, Midkiff explained that the test group does not fully represent all needs and uses. Part of the assessment will include asking more faculty members to use it and give feedback.

Pike explained that TLOS has a timeline in place for selecting a platform and transitioning to the new system. There will be a 2-3 year timeline to phase out Scholar and transition to a new system. A selection will be made by summer. During this time a systematic transition will also occur and be completed by fall 2015. By fall of 2016, 75% of courses will be transitioned into new system. By Fall 2017, TLOS will complete the transition.

CFA asked that since Canvas is more for supporting courses, what has been learned about platforms that support collaborative projects. Pike explained that Shared Point Online, Google Groups, and Box are possible providers. TLOS is currently working on this aspect and will also talk to different constituents on campus. Preliminary exploration has been done, but TLOS has not fully researched this yet. Pike explained that the biggest question is compliance and trust. The institution currently has an assumption that we can put certain information on these systems (e.g., grades) that meet FERPA requirements. Therefore, TLOS needs to make sure that whichever platform Virginia Tech uses can provide this same level of protection. Some of the options will provide this protection once we enter into contract with them.

Pike explained that they will be doing more campus notices about town hall meetings. During these meetings the Canvas site will be shown and the needs will be assessed. Canvas has a website where people can go to look at it: <https://tlos.vt.edu/NextGenerationLMS/>

3. Grievance process for tenure-track and tenured faculty

Finney explained that there were some possible improvements for the current grievance process for tenure-track and tenured faculty. One issue is that University Legal Council has classified department heads as university administrators. However, given that most grievances are filed against unit leaders (e.g., department heads) and they respond to Step 1, the process has evolved that when a department head for example rules that an issue is not valid for a grievance, Step 2 involved consideration by the dean. When a department head rules that an issue is not valid for grievance, it may save time to ask for a ruling on the validity issue from the special faculty committee (i.e., president of the Faculty Senate, the chair of the Faculty Senate Committee on Reconciliation, and the chair of the Faculty Review Committee).

The current process may result in a 3-4 week period of time before the special committee is convened. Finney explained that it may be better if the special committee was involved earlier in the process when a department head has ruled that the issue is not valid. The goal for the special committee to get involved sooner is to expedite the grievance process for the faculty member. Additionally, the special committee has more experience in determining when an issue is grievable. CFA members agreed that this is a good change.

Additionally, CFA members reviewed The Formal Grievance Procedure (Section 7.7.2) in the Faculty Handbook. CFA members suggested that the University should consider presenting the various grievance procedure outcomes throughout the various steps explained under section 3.7.2 rather than explaining it under section 3.7.4. CFA members also recommended that section 3.7.4., which defines what issues are valid for grievance, be moved before explaining the grievance process steps in section 3.7.2. Finney will gather this feedback and draft the new changes for CFA members to review.

4. Reports from CFA representatives on other commissions and committees

No reports were provided.

5. Announcements

No announcements were made.

6. Other business

No new business was discussed.

Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.
Recorder, Elsa Camargo