Faculty Education Technology Committee (FETC)

2022-2023 Annual Report

Committee membership: Chelsea Reid-Short (Psychology) Chair, DJ Connor (Physics), Secretary, Juliette Bourdier (French/Francophone Studies), Can Dalyan (Sociology & Anthropology), David Parisi (Communication), Walter Persons (Geology), and Mark Pyles (Finance).

Ex-officio: Deana Caveny-Noecker (Associate Provost), Zach Hartje (TLT/Deputy CIO), Mark Staples (CIO & Sr VP for IT)

The committee communicated through Zoom and email to discuss issues associated with education and technology. The Committee reaffirmed its role as a liaison and advocate for faculty concerns with educational technology as a distinguishing feature between the Committee and other campus entities (e.g., CETL, TLT, OE Steering Committee). Our first meeting focused on bringing new members up to date on last year’s work, including concerns regarding the continuing requirement for all faculty to enroll in OE training and efforts to improve EXTERNAL email branding. Remaining meetings continued to explore these issues and address new concerns. New action items included: discontinuing use of faculty accounts to email advisees without the knowledge or consent of faculty, improving display of course photo rolls in MyPortal, and exploring the possibility of developing literacy standards for faculty and students.

In continuation of the 2022-2023 Committee’s work, the Committee followed-up with Zach Hartje, Chis Meshanko (OE course instructor), and Silvia Rodriguez Sabater (Chair of the OE Steering Committee). A member of the Faculty OE Steering Committee also joined a Committee meeting to discuss OE at the College. Zach and Chris noted that the requirement to complete OE training was proposed by the OE Steering Committee with its faculty representation. Removal of roster faculty stipends for course completion were acknowledged as a component of broader institutional budget cuts. There are no plans to change this current approach. The OE Steering Committee summarized changes to online course offering caps and acknowledged a lack of a current strategic plan for OE at the College. Development of a new strategic plan is being delayed to include the newly formed CETL, execution of the college-wide strategic plan, and possible addition of graduate programs. There has been no formal survey of faculty regarding perspectives on OE training and education at CofC in recent history. Next year’s Committee should seek an update on the status of an OE strategic plan and provide input.

Zach Hartje reported reductions in successful phishing attempts with the onset of EXTERNAL email branding. The Committee provided a list of internal domains that continued to be tagged as EXTERNAL to be added to a white-list of domains. The Committee requested and provided feedback on a method for faculty to submit requests to white-list other domains as needed. This request form has now been developed and will be launched soon.

The Committee expressed concern regarding the use of faculty accounts to email advisees without the knowledge or consent of the faculty members and noted that this use was a violation of faculty trust and independence and also created confusion between faculty and advisees. Zach Hartje reported that these emails occurred due to default templates in current operating systems and was working to override the system to ensure these emails do not continue.
The Committee noted that the quality of course photo roll displays declined in the transition from MyCharleston to MyPortal. Faculty are no longer able to obtain a print view version to help learn the names of students. Some improvements to the system have been made (e.g., page consistently loads). IT is continuing to work to resolve the display issue by exploring other tools (e.g., Ellucian Page Builder) with a projected timeline of Summer 2023. Next year’s Committee should seek an update on this item.

As explored by the Committee in previous academic years, we discussed the possibility of developing technical and digital literacy standards for faculty and students. Mark Staples was a strong advocate for development of such standards. The Committee researched existing standards published by other entities (e.g., State of South Carolina). The Committee discussed the recent increase in available resources (e.g., campus subscription to LinkedIn Learning, OE Course) as well as the recent decline in incentives for faculty to undertake training in technological and digital literacy (removal of stipend for roster faculty in OE training course). Challenges to enforcing or incentivizing student standards were also discussed. The Committee determined that development of technical and digital literacy standards is an unrealistic goal without institutional support in the form of clear incentives. Deana Caveny-Noecker noted that the administration is currently prioritizing other initiatives (e.g., faculty salaries).

Other items discussed during the academic year included summarizing recent policy changes to limits placed on computer purchases, seeking improved webcams in classrooms, and adding display of required institutional credit hours in Degree Works for students simultaneously pursuing a Bachelor’s of Science degree and a Bachelor’s of Arts degree for a double-major. Zach Hartje and the Committee followed-up with and addressed the issue of degree credit-hours display. TLT is continuing to explore options to improve classroom web cameras and recently ordered an Owl Camera that they hope to have available for testing soon. The Committee has offered to test new technology when available. Camera improvements may coincide with changes to classroom scheduling procedures. Next year’s Committee should seek an update on this item.

The Committee thanks David Parisi, who is rotating off the committee for sabbatical, for several consecutive years of service.

The committee for 2023-2024: continuing members Juliette Bourdier (French, Francophone & Italian), Can Dalyan (Sociology & Anthropology), DJ Connor (Physics), Walter Persons (Geology), and Chelsea Reid-Short (Psychology), new members: Deb McGee (Communication) and Christine Moore (Computer Science).

Submitted May 2023.

Chelsea Reid-Short, Chair.