

## **University of Washington Faculty Council on Educational Technology**

The Faculty Council on Educational Technology met Thursday, October 28, at 10:00 a.m., in 36 Gerberding. The meeting was called to order at 10:05 a.m.

### **Synopsis:**

1. Introductions, voting rights for ex officios
2. Recruit FCET chair
3. Proposed electronic system to detect plagiarism.

### **Introductions, voting rights for ex officios**

Council members introduced themselves. The minutes were approved. The agenda was approved with one addition. It was moved, seconded and unanimously passed to grant voting rights to eligible ex officio members Bob Albrecht (Emeritus faculty), Nancy McMurrer (ALUW), and Kay Pilcher (PSO).

### **Recruit FCET Chair**

There being no current chair of FCET, the first order of business was to recruit a chairperson.

After general discussion, it was determined that no individual could devote the time or had all the expertise/history deemed necessary to serve as chairperson. However, three members volunteered to divide the duties and serve as a "troika." It is assumed that one of these individuals will be able to succeed as chair next year. Kalpana Kanal, David Kirschtel and James Kitts will meet and divide the chair's duties among themselves. FCET members are pleased to have found a creative solution that will move the work of the Council forward.

### **Proposed Electronic System to Detect Plagiarism.**

Arnold Berger (Bothell) asked for discussion about an Internet-based company that will analyze student papers for plagiarism and provide faculty members with a report on each paper. The company involved would like to license their service to the UW for a pilot program.

Berger said the service compares each paper with a huge database of papers and indicates text matches by highlighting the text in question. Because the service uses such a huge database, the service is instantaneous. The service is not very expensive – they anticipate licensing it to the entire Bothell campus for about \$1000, and billing based on the number of submissions. Berger is concerned about plagiarism in part because he sees it as the theft of intellectual property. He has worked in private business and has seen major prosecutions arise from the theft of intellectual property.

Werner Kaminsky suggested that student papers fall into another category than intellectual property in business. Because the goal of a university is to teach students, plagiarism should not be treated a "policing" issue, but as a learning opportunity. The instructor makes it clear that sources must be documented or points will be deducted. In cases where the student does not document the source of the material, but presents it as original material, the instructor notes this fact and subtracts points for each instance where the source is not documented. If the entire paper is plagiarized, therefore, the student receives zero points and learns a more valuable lesson and a better way of going about his or her work.

Kitts said he prefers prevention, not policing after the fact. He requires students to sign a contract acknowledging that their work will be submitted to an electronic plagiarism test and giving consent to adding their papers to a database for future plagiarism checks. Kitts does not tell the students what service

he is using. Kitts said it is important to have a contract with each student if an electronic service is to be used.

David Kirschtel said the UW Code of Conduct covers plagiarism. One solution he has used is to have everyone read the UW Code and have each student's lab partner sign off that they've read it.

Berger asked that FCET formally support a pilot project for an electronic plagiarism check that can be integrated with Blackboard (for Bothell) and Catalyst (for Seattle). Kaminsky could support this if the pilot program is set up with clear recommendations as to how to handle the result. The student has to know that the rules are not "bent" from classroom to classroom. Bob Albrecht said that recommendations are valueless, because each professor is going to use the results in a different way.

Kitts added that students have legal rights to a hearing if accused of plagiarism. This can preclude any grade being given at all, until the legal process is complete.

Kaminsky was strongly in favor of any electronic system being used only to identify undeclared material, so that students can be taught the proper way to do research and document it. This should be an academic, not a disciplinary, issue. The technology should only be used to identify undeclared material so the grade can be reduced on its merits, not as a disciplinary matter. Every part of a paper that is plagiarism is the equivalent of a blank page. This takes the issue away from a legal basis, and returns it to a pedagogical basis.

The council expressed interest in further evaluation of Berger's proposal, especially in getting information on whether student undergraduate papers are considered intellectual property or not. Penny Leggott suggested that FCET have a presentation from an ethicist who could suggest ways to help students define the boundaries of plagiarism; specifically, what is acceptable and what is not.

Berger will organize a FCET subcommittee that will prepare an expanded proposal on a pilot program for an electronic plagiarism check to be integrated into Catalyst. This issue will be added to the 2004-2005 agenda with the expectation that, if approved by the council after the subcommittee's work is complete, the proposal will be submitted to SEC as an item for the Faculty Senate's consideration.

A December meeting will be added and scheduling for Winter Quarter will begin soon.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:30 p.m. *Minutes by Linda Fullerton, Recorder.*

**Present:**

Professors: Kaminsky, Kanal, Kirschtel, Kitts, Leggott

Ex-Officio: Albrecht, McMurrer, Lane, Pilcher

**Absent:**

Professors: Brixey, Gravlee, Rojas, Roth, Sinanan

Ex-Officio: Lewis, Macklin, Szatmary