

Academic Technology Committee

MINUTES OF MEETING: 4/14/2023

Submitted Exec. Committee: _____

Submitted Academic Senate: _____

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE :5/5/2023

Approved by Exec. Committee: _____

Approved by Academic Senate: _____

ATC Members Present: Chris Sales (Chair), Jorge Balbas, Cecile Bendavid, Ovande Furtado, Tomo Hattori, Joel Krantz, Stephen Kutay, Wayne Smith, Jenn Wolfe; *Absent:* Soheil Boroushaki, Paige Hajiloo, Sam Seifzadeh; *Permanent Guest:* Helen Heinrich; *Executive Secretary:* Ron Philip; *Recording Secretary:* Celene Valenzuela; *Guests:* Joyce Marie Brusasco, Gretchen Macchiarella, Susana Marcelo, Herbert Serrano, Paul Schantz, Ryan Conlogue

1. Announcements

- a. **Associated Students Election** – Ron Philip shared that Paige Hajiloo and Josie Anderson were elected, by the CSUN student body, as Associated Students president and vice president for the 2023-24 academic year. Ron Philip added that he looks forward to continuing the collaboration with Associated Students representatives and with President-elect Paige Hajiloo in her new capacity.

- 2. **Approval of Minutes** – The minutes from the March 3, 2023 meeting were approved.

3. Chair’s Report

- a. **Faculty Senate Update** – Chris Sales shared that at the March 30, 2023, Faculty Senate meeting, President Beck, Provost Komarraju, and Statewide Academic Senator Adam Swenson provided their report. There was a presentation by Shayan Moshtael, Associated Students President, Sakilé Camara, Director of Academic Assessment and Program Review, and a policy item presentation by Lindsay Hansen Brown, Chair of the Personnel Planning and Review Committee, and AVP Diane Guido. There was additional conversation and reading of the Philosophy Resolution in Support of Transgender and Nonbinary Equity, Inclusion, and Justice at CSUN resolution by Educational Equity Committee members Jinah Kim, Nayan Ramirez, Will Garrow, Jacob Lau, Sheena Malhotra, Martin Pousson, Sid Hansen.

- b. **ACAT Update** – Chris Sales shared that at the March 20, 2023, Advisory Committee on Academic Technology meeting, there was a conversation on the CSUN Ready Affordable Course Materials for Undergraduates, custom accessibility department training, and an invitation to the upcoming CSUN Digital Equity Day on Friday, April 28, 2023. The Digital Equity Day event will start at 10:00 am, and be held in a HyFlex format on Zoom and in-person in Sequoia Hall room 104.

4. VP/CIO’s Report

- a. **Canvas Template** – Ron Philip shared that feedback received in prior meetings of the Academic Technology Committee, and in various other meetings across the University, reflected the need for as much course structure uniformity as possible to enhance the learning experience for students as they transitioned from one class to another. Helen

Heinrich shared that there was extensive collaboration and effort among Faculty Development, Academic Technology, and Academic Technology Fellows to develop the Canvas Template. Gretchen Macchiarella added that the Canvas Template is an option for all faculty to opt-in, and considered use cases, functionality, accessibility, design navigation, and quick start-up. Canvas is a shared space for all faculty and students, and it is leveraged for in-person, hybrid, and fully asynchronous classes. Gretchen Macchiarella further added that many functions were considered, primarily student requests. According to a 2022 IT Survey, 76% of respondents believe that their learning will improve by having Canvas courses structured similarly. Joyce Marie Brusasco shared that if faculty were to be assigned a course with limited preparation time, they could easily download the template and customize it. If faculty already had a course from previous academic years, they could choose the tools and options that they would like the new course to display.

Susana Marcelo shared that CSU has a distance education rubric, and the Canvas Template is modeled after the quality, learning, and teaching rubric best practices. For example, the Canvas Template is easily customizable by everyone, especially faculty who are teaching in an online modality. The rubric was implemented in the template with those best practices and equity accessibility in mind. Some examples include having a readily available course description, learning outcomes objectives, campus student services, cultural services, and how faculty are there to support students with disability services. Susana Marcelo added that ensuring transparency throughout the course is also very important. A transparent assignment design mode was implemented into the course, which Faculty Development offers training on, considering assignments, discussions, and anything that students submit. Additionally, the universal design and accessibility functions are easy to use by simply selecting a button.

Gretchen Macchiarella shared that extensive work was done in the creation of the Canvas Template to develop a product that serves both faculty and students efficiently. Initially, feedback and brainstorming took place within an interdisciplinary core team, and subject matter experts on equity, teaching, and universal design for learning from across campus were brought in to improve the template and training module. As a result, a set of teaching resources with best practices was developed to include within the product, so that faculty can do the work they want to do while being supported in creating the best teaching environment. Gretchen Macchiarella added that the core team is continuously receiving feedback and making uninterrupted updates to the template, which are automatically added without the need for faculty to do additional setup.

Gretchen Macchiarella conducted a demo and tour of the Canvas Template and its customization. The home page is a landing page with an easy-to-customize setup that includes all the buttons that help students easily navigate the course from the first day. Faculty can customize and duplicate their class structure and modules from an instructor page. Joyce Marie Brusasco shared that each faculty can make the template their own. The tutorials have instructional how-to videos to demonstrate how to import buttons, copy modules, and make personal videos. A welcome module is also available, which faculty can use to introduce themselves, the course, the course objectives, and other items required by university policy. The template also includes sample wording. Joyce Marie Brusasco added that there is a separate module that highlights student resources, library resources, and a research toolkit.

Herbert Serrano shared that a message was posted in Canvas highlighting the availability of a new template, along with an email and link to solicit a sandbox. Once the sandbox is ready, faculty can start using the template. The Canvas Template was deployed at the beginning of the year, and the core group has been collecting and implementing enhancements based on feedback. At the beginning of the year, 128 faculty had downloaded the Canvas Template, and the number of downloads continues to increase. Herbert Serrano added that during the summer, there will be Canvas Template clinics for faculty to meet directly with instructional technologists on the Academic Technology team. The schedule will be included in the CSUN Academic Technology newsletter.

Chris Sales asked about the options to delete and hide modules. Gretchen Macchiarella replied that the core group did not create too many unnecessary modules. They tried to make the template as simple as possible while still providing the best possible functionality. Gretchen Macchiarella emphasized the importance of universal design and explained that it takes a lot of work to ensure easy navigation and customization. Jenn Wolfe mentioned that she received the Canvas Template announcement but it disappeared after she closed her tab. She asked if the announcement would be posted again in a few days to remind faculty. Jenn Wolfe also shared that she downloaded the template and has been using it. Herbert Serrano explained that the timing of the Canvas announcement was strategically planned to capture the attention of those who will be teaching this summer and those returning in the fall before final exams. An additional marketing campaign will be launched soon to announce the Canvas Template clinics that will take place over the summer.

Stephen Kutay inquired about the data available on the barriers students encounter when navigating campus course guides. He mentioned that faculty may not have the opportunity to see other faculty courses, and they may assume that everyone is using Canvas in the same way. Helen Heinrich suggested that this could be included as a question in the 2024 IT Survey, as faculty will have had time to use the Canvas Template. Helen Heinrich also mentioned that data has been collected from students about accessibility challenges in Canvas, including broken links, non-functional buttons, and other aspects of accessibility. Ron Philip thanked the Canvas Template core group for all the hard work and collaboration that has gone into the creation of the template. Ron Philip then asked for tips on how faculty, who have multiple courses already prepared, can leverage the use of the new Canvas Template for efficiencies. Joyce Marie Brusasco shared that adjustments on the Canvas Template save a lot of time, as faculty can duplicate modules and customize buttons. Joyce Marie Brusasco also noted that she is able to adjust and build her already-prepared courses for the first weeks of class in just a few hours. The resources built on the Canvas Template are up-to-date and can be easily imported. Joyce Marie Brusasco added that the Canvas Template clinics will help both faculty who have their courses prepared and those who need to create them. Susana Marcelo also highlighted the flexibility of the Canvas Template, which is suitable for both new and experienced faculty, and the embedded tutorial module with videos that explains the Canvas features.

Paul Schantz, as a student, appreciates the idea of having consistency from course to course. Professors often include their material in downloadable class syllabi, typically in the form of a PDF or Word document. The Canvas Template can help reduce some bloat in professor syllabi by saving time and ensuring they don't forget to include materials and new services. As a Student Affairs professional, Paul Schantz inquired about the intention of the new student services section and whether it will remain a living document that will change as new services become available. For example, the option for temporary emergency

housing available for a student who becomes homeless. Herbert Serrano shared that one item considered was students who read their course syllabi using their mobile devices. Instead of uploading a PDF including the information in regular text format, the Canvas Template reduces the student's need to zoom in and out of a PDF. Herbert Serrano added that as it relates to the student resources section, it will remain a living document, constantly updated with new information.

Joel Krantz shared that some faculty members prefer to use scantrons for tests to prevent students from looking for answers on their computers. However, there are colleagues who have reported that the using a separate lock-down browser with Canvas quizzes is not convenient. Joel Krantz hopes that the Canvas testing option functionality can be improved to address this issue. In response, Herbert Serrano explained that the Canvas lock-down feature leverages a stand-alone secure browser that prevents anything else from running in the background while the quiz is being taken. This is a heavily used feature, with thousands of individual exams taken in the fall semester, and it is relatively easy for students to use.

Gretchen Macchiarella noted that one of the great things about Canvas is that even if faculty prefer to give students a scantron test, Canvas still provides students with the necessary resources to successfully take the test. Faculty who choose the scantron route are not excluded. Jenn Wolfe added that it would be useful to have the lock-down feature in the Canvas mobile app. Jenn Wolfe shared that she uses the Canvas mobile app feature, but was only able to see the student options. She hoped to be able to make modifications as well. Herbert Serrano explained that there are both student and faculty mobile apps available, and depending on which one you use, you will have different views and options. Faculty can use both apps with the same credentials. Susana Marcelo added that she had reviewed the faculty feature using both a tablet and a desktop view and found that sections can be made visible and invisible depending on the course needs.

Wayne Smith noted that while it is convenient and useful for students, for faculty to add the syllabi in the new Canvas Template format, it still needs to be submitted to the Dean's office, and modifications will need to be made. Wayne Smith inquired about the possibility of adjusting dates when courses are copied from a previous semester to a new upcoming semester. Herbert Serrano shared that there are several ways to make these adjustments, and faculty are invited to contact the FTC and attend the Canvas Template clinics this summer. Joyce Marie Brusasco added that there was intentionality behind asking faculty to add their syllabi onto the syllabi tab. The feature helps faculty who use the Canvas Insights tool, which has a tab for tracking how many times students have accessed and viewed the course syllabi. Ron Philip shared that as the core group receives more feedback and the Canvas Template is more widely adopted, the group can be invited back to provide an update on adoption and new features.

- b. IT Road Ahead Plan** – Ron Philip provided an overview of the draft of the road map planning for the Division of Information Technology soliciting feedback for further refinement of the plan prior to its finalization. The Division of Information Technology in consultation with its divisional staff, university technology governance committee members, college, and cross divisional leadership has been developing and refining its draft IT Roadmap plan, a multi-year plan for technology implementation that aligns with the strategic directions and priorities outlined in CSUN's Road Ahead. The draft roadmap plan outlines four key strategic

priorities: expanding digital equity, improving digital services, enabling teaching and scholarship, and strengthening IT capabilities and capacity. The implementation of each strategic priority will involve a series of initiatives, which will complement the ongoing efforts to maintain secure and reliable foundational technology services. Many of these initiatives will require collaboration and integration with other divisions within CSUN. Given the multi-year nature of the plan, the initiatives will be prioritized and phased in over time. The latest iteration of the draft plan reflects a focus on a range of initiatives during the first year of implementation, including providing students with access to devices and internet connectivity, expanding support for faculty to make course materials accessible, enhancing the CSUN portal and mobile app, promoting adoption of the E-portfolio to enhance student success, building capacity to support research, developing professional development plans for IT staff, establishing an IT staff DEI advisory committee, and strengthening information security measures.

5. Discussion Topics

- a. **ATC Chair Election in May** – Chris Sales thanked the committee members for their collaboration during the present academic year and reminded the committee that nominations and voting for the ATC Chair, for the next academic year, will be held in May.

6. Policy – None

- a. **Artificial Intelligence** - Cecile Bendavid shared that the committee could consider a policy on artificial intelligence for the campus. Chris Sales shared that the committee members can present their thoughts and suggestion on this at the next committee meeting. The committee agreed that there may be too many unknowns at this time and it may be advisable to come up with some best practice guidance to share.

7. New Business – None.

Meeting adjourned at 2:58 p.m.