



To: Faculty Council

From: Professor Charles Jia
Chair, Teaching Methods and Resources Committee

Date: May 27, 2009

Item: Report on Committee Activities 2008-2009 for Information

This report provides a summary of the activities of the Committee for the period October 1, 2008 to May 8, 2009 during which five meetings were held.

- The Committee's top priority in 2008/2009 was to identify and promote best practices in teaching.
- The Committee has launched a faculty-wide lecture series to promote best practices.
 - The first event, a panel discussion on large class teaching featuring past teaching award winners, was held on April 16, 2009 with about 80 attendees.
 - The second event will be on teaching tools and technologies (including the Blackboard), which has been tentatively scheduled for late June 2009.
- To address an issue raised in the Town Hall meeting, the Committee is assessing the resource within the Faculty for helping new instructors and is planning a series of informal meetings between expert instructors/teaching award winners and new instructors.
- The Committee has conducted a Blackboard user survey. The highlight of the findings is attached to this report. The findings will be used in designing the Blackboard help sessions, which will likely be offered in this summer.
- The Committee has selected the winners for the two teaching awards.
- Among other things, the Committee is also working on
 - creating a new template for the Faculty Teaching Award nomination
 - finding an effective way to archive course data, thus easing data collection for future CEAB reviews
- The Committee Chair gratefully acknowledges the extraordinary contribution of the following members to improving teaching quality in this Faculty
 - Susan McCahan
 - Lisa Romkeyand the dedication and hard work of all members of the Committee this past year.

Highlights of Blackboard User Survey Findings

1. Total number of responses: 73
2. 96% are using or have used Blackboard
3. Tools used:
 - Announcements (86%)
 - Course content (83%)
 - Email (78%)
 - Grade book (77%)
 - Discussion board (28%)
 - Groups (16%)
 - Assignment (10%)
 - Library Resource (6%)
4. Quality of use (average score: 3.07 on a scale of 5.00)
 - 5 - My use enhances student performance. (1.5%)
 - 4 - Well, but I could use more input on best practices. (43%)
 - 3 - I meet the minimal requirements of my students. (40%)
 - 2 - Sparingly, my limited use does not benefit my students. (3%)
 - 1 - I use it solely to make course materials available: (13%)
5. Primary reasons for refraining from using Blackboard (40 responses)
 - Response time/interface issues (32.5 %)
 - Time limitations (20 %)
 - Lack of training and support (7.5 %)
 - Lack of student preparation (7.5 %)
 - No valid proof Bb enhances student learning (2.5 %)
 - Prefer personal interaction (2.5 %)
6. Needs for training
 - Yes (36%)
7. Preferred training format (47 responses)
 - Group instruction (70 %)
 - One-on-one from fellow faculty/staff (32 %)
 - Online (30 %)
 - From a Blackboard specialist (20 %)
8. Sample comments and suggestions
 - "I rather like the system and use it to meet my class needs"
 - "The cumbersome interface and slow response of the system"
 - "Convolute (convolute) presentation and incompatibility with the multi-session courses run at the University"
 - "Students say the portal is slow. For me, so many annoying little quirks."
 - Like to learn "Best practices to enhance learning, more than just learning the administrative tools."
 - "I'd like to see how BB could be used to enhance the student experience, in ways I perhaps cannot even imagine."

If you have further suggestions, please contact Daryl Weade, Faculty's Instruction and Learning Technology Specialist at daryl.weade@utoronto.ca