

MSCF Minute



An electronic publication of the Minnesota State College Faculty

Technology and Teaching

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Volume 4, Issue 15

December 14, 2017

For many of us, technology and teaching cannot be separated. From clickers or videos in the classroom to a fully online course, the tools that we choose to use (or not use) determine how our courses will be structured and how teaching and learning ensue. This is why it is important that faculty are an integral part of the technology decision-making processes, on both campus and system levels. This partnership generally works well. For example, on most campuses, IT and faculty serve together on their Campus Academic Technology Team (CATT) and jointly determine which D2L tools will be available on that campus.

That partnership became a little bumpy at Inver Hills.

Several years ago, our campus had a vibrant faculty-led committee who weighed in on technology and online teaching. Administrative changes and new staff hires unfortunately mired that group into a rubric and rule-bound committee instead of the conversational and creative practice it had once been. Faculty interest dried up and the group disbanded. Our CATT served largely as a vehicle to receive Minnesota

State communication; that group also faded as all of its members went on sabbatical this year.

Without faculty leadership and investment in IT decisions and processes, problems started popping up - particularly with D2L-Brightspace support. Help Desk tickets created by faculty were ignored or forgotten. Faculty received information about D2L-Brightspace that was incorrect. Chaos ensued after the major August update: summer courses closed to students on the day the course ended. Faculty requesting simple tools that they once had and were now gone - like the ability to create widgets, as an example - were told that Minnesota State had made a system-wide decision to turn off that tool. It was unclear on our campus how decisions about D2L tools were made; faculty were certainly not involved in those decisions.

Deciding to turn the situation around, several of us created a Teaching and Technology Committee (TTC). This is a faculty-only group limited to members of MSCF. With strong support from our CAO and Director of IT, together administration and faculty

outlined the purposes of this group; we had one member of the TTC join the CATT for coordination. This newly formed committee requested that Minnesota State send its D2L-Brightspace staff to our campus to go through the D2L tools so we could know with certainty how decisions about D2L-Brightspace permissions were made.

In October, several Minnesota State D2L-Brightspace staff traveled to Inver Grove Heights and spent a couple of hours with us; in early December, faculty, administrators, and D2L support staff met with a D2L-Brightspace representative who came to our campus. Both events were successful and informative, and we hope, emblematic of a new era of more successful communication about technology at the college. Administration has welcomed and facilitated this resurgence of faculty engagement, as well.

Still in its nascent stage, the Teaching and Technology Committee has re-established a faculty voice and leadership in decisions about technology, particularly D2L-Brightspace. At Inver Hills, we find one more example of the positive changes when faculty forge renewed positive relations with

administration and take the lead in college functions related to teaching and learning.

Did you know there's a matrix you can access listing every D2L tool turned on by the system office which also includes the eLearning third party vendors contracted with Minnesota State? Many campuses have collaborative teams who determine which of the tools turned on by the state are going to remain turned on at their individual campus. If your campus doesn't, perhaps it's time to bring that point to your local CATT team (Campus Academic Technology Team). Each campus is supposed to have a cross-functional team for just those types of discussions. To see the recently updated list created by the system office, go to <https://tinyurl.com/yausjex2>.