Interview with Jon Blumhardt and Ross Egloria regarding Distance Education
March 16, 2012

Tech Resources Committee Participants:
Sally Dunan, Rob Edmondson, Pat Patterson, Michael Cress, Mike Meyer

Questions:

1. What types of assessment are being used for DE?
   Ross: DE assessments are posted on the HCC Intranet under the Distance Education link, in the lower right hand corner. The direct link to this page is: http://programs.honolulu.hawaii.edu/intranet/node/595
   DE performs a survey each semester, except for Fall 2010-Spring 2011, to assess Distance Education support. The structure of the survey will be changed next year to reflect changes in services and technology. The content of this survey is not specific to any particular course. DE will also be providing an electronic version of Form G (the standard course assessment survey for Liberal Arts courses used at HCC). Previously the course assessment survey was only available in hard copy format.

2. As there may have been a lot of change in the role of Distance Education at HCC since the previous self-study, can you describe Distance Education in its current form?
   Jon: There is currently a work backlog. The transition has not been finalized yet. Elton (Ogoso) is still partially supporting the Louie Center in Bldg 2, Room 201. Jon B. is doing all of the curriculum design and web course production. There are currently 8 live prototype courses in development, and two courses that have not yet started development that are required to support the first summer session this year. The current major development is focused on courses to support the FIRE curriculum, which is trying to obtain FESHE certification to meet the curriculum requirements and standards of the National Fire Academy. Curriculum production is currently providing just-in-time delivery to support for development of new courses. [EMC Production Report, updated as of March 13, 2012] Other courses, such as ART 101 also require upgrading to meet near time requirements. There is a lot of work to be done and DE needs to have another person involved. Jon has submitted a budget request for and Education Technology specialist with web skills to assist in course production and support.

3. Can you describe what you are developing?
   Jon: For example the advanced ceramic tile course, which has no written curriculum and no videos, needs to be produced as a distance education course. The instructor has provided the textbook and quizzes he uses for the course. Jon has found videos that can be used to support the course. His role is to assist with the actual curriculum development in addition to web development, including development of images or animation as needed. He has a MAC server in the EMC to use for this purpose. All of the courses he develops are password protected.

4. How many DE courses are there at HCC?
   Ross: There are about 40-45 DE courses total. Since some courses have multiple sections, typically about 60 DE courses are offered each semester. There are usually more DE courses offered in the fall and fewer DE courses offered in the spring each year.
5. What kinds of technology are supported by DE?

Jon: There are many options available including using standard video reformatted for use as streaming video, links to video on YouTube, or we can shoot our own video and use that. He is interested in investigating prototype lecture capture systems, such as WireCast and BOINX, that can convert graphics displayed on a monitor or wireless USB input in conjunction with internal switching software. His goal is to convert room 7-305 into a full-fledged studio and training faculty regarding the pros and cons of using different types of technology.

The campus currently has about 132 media classrooms, developed over a 20 year period.

6. Can you describe the kind of training you provide for faculty?

Jon: For example, for Gopal (Professor Gopalikrishnan), the goal is to provide 3D capability in his lab using grant funds and to replace his ELMO with a high end visual presenter capable of 138X magnification. This would enable him to show 3D underwater video, and to be able to give demonstrations where he starts from a macrosopic level and drills down one step at a time to a very detailed examination of aquatic organisms.

So, Jon’s approach in working with faculty is to work with them individually to find out what they want to be able to do, or where they are getting stuck, and to assist in solving the problem.

7. To what extent do we have redundant (hardware/software) resources? And, do we need the redundancy?

Ross: We do have redundancy in resources. One way to view this is that it provides options to instructors to allow them to decide what they want to do. We also have redundancy because UH has never mandated the use of any one specific tool, such as Laulima, for Distance Education. There is a new system group looking at this particular issue. In particular, they are examining what other institutions are doing. All of the other institutions have mandated the use of one system for Distance Education and provide training for that system, so that faculty know how to use it. Other institutions also have dedicated curriculum specialists to help develop courses, and require students to take a 1 credit course for how to use the learning environment technology.

Jon: The problem with Laulima is that it’s a warehouse and not user friendly (or ergonomic) to use. He recommends to faculty that they use Laulima for the things it does really well, such as posting materials that change every semester and for exams, but to use other resources such as a custom web site for materials that don’t change from one semester to the next. (This avoids unnecessarily storing redundant materials in Laulima.) Jon sets up web sites using HTML5 to support mobile devices, rather than FLASH which does not support mobile devices.

8. What about mechanisms to make it easier to upload content to Laulima?

Ross: There has been discussion about creating a template. Currently, he is still collecting information about how people are using the tools in Laulima. What he has learned is that the tools in Laulima, because it is an open source software package, are frequently similar but that’s because they were developed by different people.
9. How does UH manage the Sakai (Laulima) development process?
   
   Ross: I have not really talked to the Sakai developers and don't know about that. I have worked mostly with the customer support at UH with regard to problems or questions.

   There is a security issue with using Laulima for testing, as it is possible for more than one student to login using the same account and password at the same time (and permit collaboration). Sakai (Laulima) does not have a message board for discussing these types of problems - just email.

10. General discussion notes.
   
   Jon: one problem he has noted is that many faculty have fairly low technical competence and cannot readily adapt to new technical environments. So, adequate training regarding use of different technologies is important.

   Another problem noted is lack of space for faculty work. It's not clear what Laulima's space limitations are. Other than Laulima, faculty may not be familiar with procedures for requesting and obtaining space on UH servers.

   General consensus is that it would help to standardize what we do by establishing best practices, identifying common tasks and delineating the resources available to accomplish those tasks. There is a need for faculty training, and for students support.

11. Has there been any consideration of participating in iTunes U? Many other institutions are doing this. It seems that UH is the only one not doing that.

   Ross: I'm not aware it's been discussed, but I'm open to the idea.

   Mike Meyer: There are real concerns about iTunes U because of licensing constraints. If faculty want to use that fine, but they need to be advised that they lose the rights to their work if they go that route.