

# OAK Faculty Advisory Committee

Minutes for meeting of July 11, 2014

## 1. Who we are:

A working group under my direction of about a dozen faculty from across the schools that will convene actively this summer (starting July, 2014) and will guide us through at least one cycle of upgrades and improvements with our Blackboard learning management system. (One of our tasks is to make recommendations for an appropriate academic support structure, so the question of whether the committee will become part of the standing working groups of the institution has yet to be determined.) We welcome your participation even if you're only able to dial in during some or all of the next 12 months or if you feel you need to send a designee to one or more of the meetings. The time commitment should be on the order of a few hours every few weeks, as you read, review, and respond to various issues and proposed upgrades.

Cynthia Cyrus, Associate Provost, Chair

A&S Tim Hanusa, Chemistry

A&S: Richard Pitt, Sociology

A&S Virginia Scott, French and Italian

BLR: Michael Hime, Music History and Literature

DIV: Jimmy Byrd, American Religious History

ENG: Jerry Roth, Computer Science

GPC: Craig Smith, Psychology

GPC: Melissa Gresalfi, T&L

Law: Larry Reeves, Law

Law: Suzanna Sherry, Law

MED: Heather Davidson, Program in Interprofessional Education

NURS: Mavis Schorn

NURS: Abby Parish

OWEN: Jesse Blocher

CFT: Derek Bruff

Library: Cliff Anderson

VUIT: Kelly McGill-Barrett

## 2. Why we're here... (some context)

With Cindy Franco's departure from her OAK support role, we needed both a quick interim solution and a longer-term review of how OAK should be supported on campus and what it should do for the faculty.

Currently:

There's an interim support team out of VUIT with links to EMOS (Greg Kyle's team)

There's a Steering Committee

And there's us: the faculty advisory committee for **the third-largest application in use at the University.**

## 3. Update from VUIT on the OAK Enhancement Project

>>(see attached slides)

#### 4. Discussion of features:

Landing pages that differ by school. (We like this)

Safe Assign (some faculty like this a lot, others don't use it; it tends to be used by the more tech-savvy; there's a piece of TRAINING that's relevant to this discussion)

Grade Center (can be hard to figure out why some things work and others don't; it didn't cohere)

Blogging (Discussion board aspect wasn't as bad as I thought; WordPress: disappointing; the thing about the Blackboard Blog is that it's a closed tool, and so there are strong reasons in the "students-as-producers" movement to make Blogs open, particularly if there were a view-only option for the blog – and if that "View by public" aspect could be turned on or left off at the discretion of the faculty member)

Avatar system (we want this; there's an Associate Dean policy discussion on this)

Course Copy, importing courses, and, especially, Linking new sessions to the calendar. (VSG really, really wants the calendar feature, but one has to copy every last file in order to link it to the calendar. From a "rolling courses forward" perspective, this is broken)

Separating old courses from current ones (The course list is too long; make old stuff move down and separate it out. Ideally, a faculty member want to be able to manage that – they might be able to promote an old class into the "current" list. But the default view should be THIS semester's courses as a group AT THE TOP of the splash page, with inactive/older courses separated visually. Nursing already has it set up this way.)

Integration with Outlook (It takes too many keystrokes in OAK to send messages; we like having OAK manage changed enrollments; nursing's bypass to this challenge is to send email as "announcements" to every user)

Want a "see what the student sees" view (especially in the gradebook. Current practice: grab a student and make them log in so you can look over their shoulder. ☺)

Batch uploads (hunted for this functionality for longer than it would have taken to upload them file by file by file.)

Connected to SRS so enrollments stay current (that's crucial functionality!)

Training in general: how do you find out that stuff exists? (Training for faculty and for Grad TAs. For instance, things you might do with this feature; the option of giving quizzes through OAK instead of during class time, and so on.)

OAK presence at New Faculty orientation.

Batching multiple sections in a semester, e.g. Chem recitations, where you have 6 sessions of 20 students each – how can you "batch" or aggregate courses so you don't have to do each announcement 6 times? (There was some discussion of the Ubertool, which grouped several sections, and the filter is by the TA, but this is a custom job each semester – we'd like a "click this button to umbrella this course" tool. That would also be useful for honors sections, for "all minors" and other academic groups)

Clickers: (some faculty want software-based options via laptops; Law uses TWEN)

Journal history: (faculty didn't know that after X days students can't open old journals; that made "reflect on your earlier journals" assignments a problem!)

Portfolio use: can students go back to their old class discussion board posts if they need access? Some of the blogs (e.g. Genetics and Literature) have been running for years,

and students can cull their earlier work; Bb doesn't currently allow that feature.  
"Portfolio" is of strong interest to DIV  
Turning on and off a course (is cumbersome and needs a reminder regularly on how to do it)  
Questions about Bb in Cloud  
    whose data is it  
    FERPA compliance  
    Do we retain a local archive  
    Will we keep back-ups

>>>**HOMEWORK:** spend a couple of hours poking around on OAK exploring the tools, and send a quick evaluation of what we most need by way of tools within the OAK environment. (My own mental categories are three-fold: 1) "It's vital," 2) "I can see why it's there" and 3) "clutter, make it go away.") Feel free to opine on things you think are missing, too.

Send your assessment to [cynthia.cyrus@vanderbilt.edu](mailto:cynthia.cyrus@vanderbilt.edu) with "OAK Tools" in the subject header. I'd like those by THURSDAY next week so that I can pull the details together in advance of our next meeting.

**NEXT MEETING: Friday July 25 at 11:00 in Kirkland 205**