UAF Faculty Development, Assessment, and Improvement (FDAI) Committee

Year End Report 2014-2015

Committee members: Franz Meyer (CNSM, Chair), Bill Barnes (CTC), Diana DiStefano (CLA), Cindy Fabbri (SoEd), David Fazzino (CLA), Andrea Ferrante (CNSM), Brian Himelbloom (SFOS), Kelly Houlton (CRCD/Dev Ed), Duff Johnston (CLA), Trina Mamoon (CLA), Channon Price (CNSM), Leslie Shallcross (Cooperate Extension Services), Amy Vinlove (SoEd)

Ex officio members: Joy Morrison (Office of Faculty Development), Mark Herrmann (Dean, SoM), Chris Lott (eLearning)

1. Summary of the 2014-2015 period

During the academic year 2014-2015, UAF's FDAI committee was able to make a number of important contributions to key issues of faculty development, assessment, and improvement. As one of its major tasks, the committee led and contributed to a first pilot implementation of UAF's new electronic course evaluation system "eXplorance Blue". To meet the strict deadlines associated with this issue and to fully resolve all associated complexities, a new sub-committee to the FDAI was formed and entrusted with conducting all course evaluation system-related work. The "Electronic Course Assessment Implementation" (ECAI) committee met weekly under the leadership of FDAI member Andrea Ferrante and worked intensively on the development of a course evaluation questionnaire and the preparations for a pilot implementation during the spring semester. Other highlights of the year included the expansion of the committee's mission to include support of UAF's "eLearning and Distance Education" group in addition to its traditional contributions to the Office of Faculty Development (OFD). Also, a committee mission statement and the committee bylaws were revised and approved by the Faculty Senate during its May 2015 meeting.

Meetings of the FDAI committee were held monthly in 222 Bunnell. All meetings were well attended and all FDAI members contributed heavily to the rich range of discussions. With one exception, all meetings were held with working quorums, indicating the commitment of the committee members to the FDAI mission. Our committee's recorder was Kelly Houlton (her fourth year as recorder), who has once again impressed the committee with her thorough and timely processing of the meeting minutes. During our first meeting in September 2014, Franz Meyer was elected to serve as committee chair for this academic year. Furthermore, Kelly Houlton was elected as co-chair of FDAI. In October 2014 the FDAI welcomed Chris Lott as a new ex-officio member to FDAI, representing UAF's eLearning and Distance Education group. Also in October 2014, the FDAI was visited by the new Faculty Senate President-Elect Dr. Debu Misra.

Details about the main activities of the FDAI committee during the 2014-2015 academic year are summarized in Section 2 of this report.

2. Highlights of 2014-2015 activities

a. Support of and Communications with the UAF Office of Faculty Development

Joy Morrison of the Office of Faculty Development (OFD) provided monthly updates on her work during the FDAI committee meetings. As during the previous years, Joy was very active throughout this academic period with supporting UAF faculty in many aspects of their work. Besides her usual activities of reaching out to established and new faculty, inviting renowned speakers for guest presentations, and organizing trips to faculty development-related conferences, she has engaged in the following activities:

- Joy has worked with the faculty community of UAF to initiate and continue five self-organized faculty learning communities that stayed active throughout the year and focused on topics such as *"Flipped Classrooms," "Communicating Across the Curriculum," "Enhancing Cross-Cultural Knowledge, Communication, and Education in STEM," "Utilizing Online Resources and Technology in Classes Targeting Rural Students,"* and *"Teaching Strategies for Early Career Faculty"*. Each learning community had a designated facilitator and met throughout the academic year. More information can be found at https://www.uaf.edu/faculty_development/faculty-learning-communit/.

- As a major activity at the beginning of the academic year the OFD organized "New Faculty Orientation" events that were a great success in fall 2014. The events were well attended and included a trip to Denali National Park in addition to a range of learning activities.

- OFD facilitated trips to a large number of faculty development events in the state and nationwide. Due to limited funds in the OFD budget, Joy Morrison decided to take a one month leave without pay in order to increase the amount of money available for faculty travel. Through Joy's commitment and support, several faculty members were able to attend events such as the *Teaching Professor Technology Conference, Denver, CO*, the *Lilly West Conference on College and University Teaching and Learning, Newport Beach, CA*, and the *Alaska Society for Technology in Education Conference, Anchorage, AK.*

- Joy organized a large number of faculty learning opportunities throughout this academic year. Organized events addressed problems such as *Stress and Time Management*, *Classroom Assessment Techniques*, *Faculty 180, Faculty Mentoring*, *Grant and Scholarly Writing*, *Promotion and Tenure*, *Communication In and Outside of the Classroom*, and several presentations on the use of technology in education. All activities were widely announced also through the OFD website (http://www.uaf.edu/faculty_development/). Many of the organized events featured renowned speakers such as Dr. Bob Lucas, Institute for Scholarly Productivity, Marsha Sousa, UAF, and many more.

- During AY 2014-15, the OFD made sure to provide a range of research-oriented development offerings in addition to many more teaching-related topics. Such research-oriented events included a number of NSF grant writing workshops.

b. Communications with the UAF eLearning and Distance Education Group

To be better informed about the full range of faculty development activities that are offered at UAF, the FDAI committee agreed in its September 2015 meeting to add a representative from UAF's eLearning and Distance Education group as an additional ex-officio member. UAF's eLearning group had been providing a wide range of faculty development training in recent years and the committee believed that

its integration into FDAI will aid in the coordination and information exchange between the various faculty development groups at UAF. Chris Lott was appointed by eLearning Director Carol Gering as the FDAI liaison and joined the committee in October 2014. The FDAI recognized that, due to their stronger focus on technology, the faculty development offerings of eLearning were highly complementary to those of OFD. Some of the highlights of the eLearning activities are listed in the following:

- Among the most important faculty development offerings of the eLearning group is the iTeach program. iTeach events are hands-on full-day workshops offered by the Instructional Design Team at UAF eLearning & Distance Education. The workshops are tailored to help faculty, instructors, lecturers, and TAs improve upon everything from how to gather and manage research, to creating course schedules that work. Several iTeach workshops were held during AY 2014/15 attracting an overall attendance of 57 participants.
- In addition to "in-classroom" iTeach activities, eLearning is also offering the popular iTeachU online training archive (https://iteachu.uaf.edu/). Many resources were added to the iTeachU space during AY2014/15.
- eLearning's Chancellor's Innovation in Technology and ELearning (CITE) program supports dedicated teaching faculty in innovation in the field of online education as well as better teaching through the incorporation of thoughtful technological tools. The CITE fellows program was fully subscribed in AY2014/15 with 9 faculty that are working with eLearning for three semesters on innovative projects related to university teaching. For more information please see https://cite.community.uaf.edu/
- Several "Teaching Tips Live" online workshops were offered during this academic year. eLarning's online workshops and seminars were highly successful attracting a 301 participants.
- Finally, eLearning is supporting the faculty community with a wealth of additional online resources such as online training and the weekly "Teaching tips" that are posted at https://iteachu.uaf.edu/category/teaching-tips/ and distributed via email.

FDAI is supporting the eLearning group in addressing three important issues of faculty development: 1) how to reach all faculty members; 2) how to inform them of faculty development opportunities; and 3) how to get faculty members to commit to the necessary timeframe for both short- and long-form development sessions. The FDAI is looking forward to continuing its collaboration with eLearning during the next academic year.

c. Implementation of UAF's Electronic Course Evaluation System

After the UAF Faculty Senate recommended adoption of an Electronic Course Evaluation system for UAF in May 2014, a contract was signed with the company eXplorance in Summer 2014 with the goal of implementing the evaluation system eXplorance Blue at UAF. The FDAI committee was entrusted with preparing a pilot implementation of eXplorance Blue for Spring 2015 and a full implementation for the system for the fall semester 2015. In order to meet the timeline requirements associated with this effort, the "Electronic Course Assessment Implementation" sub-committee was formed.

At the time of constitution, the committee was charged with two main tasks: (1) preparing a new course assessment questionnaire for UAF and (2) designing and implementing a pilot application of the

software. To successfully address these issues, the ECAI committee was formed to include members of FDAI, representatives of the Provost's office, members of OIT, experts in questionnaire design, and UAF faculty representing a range of teaching styles (in class; field; lab; online; …). Details on the work of this sub-committee can be found in the sub-committee report in **Attachment 1** of this document.

Since committee formation, additional future tasks for ECAI have emerged. These include (1) the continued monitoring of response rates of future course evaluation runs; (2) the education of faculty on how to maximize the performance of the course evaluation system; (3) the analysis of response rates for systemic issues and the addressing of identified issues. Hence, a continuation of ECAI beyond fall 2015 was proposed to and accepted by the UAF administrative committee.

d. Development of a Mission Statement for the FDAI Committee

In order to better organize committee assignments and committee work, the Senate Administrative Committee asked all Faculty Senate committees to revise or approve their committee mission statements or develop such a statement should it not be available. As only little information was available in the Faculty Senate Bylaws about the FDAI's mission, the FDAI committee spent time to develop a comprehensive and concise mission statement as well as comprehensive committee bylaws. After several rounds of adjustments and revisions, the FDAI mission statement and committee bylaws were put forward to the Faculty Senate for consideration during its meeting in May 2015. The FDAI bylaws were embedded in a larger motion that was aimed at a general overhaul of the Faculty Senate bylaw structure. After some discussions on more general bylaw issues, the motion was tabled and will be discussed again early in AY15/16.

3. Outlook into academic year 2014-2015

The committee plans to continue work in all the areas above, supporting the design of a new approach to faculty development, and further exploring other relevant issues involving the development, assessment, and improvement of our UAF faculty. We are working on strengthening a culture of faculty development at UAF, and we thank the members of the FDAI Committee for their dynamic input.

Attachment 1: ECAI Committee Year-End Report 2014 – 2015:

**Electronic Course Assessment Implementation (ECAI) Committee
Year-end report 2014-2015**

Committee members: Andrea Ferrante (CNSM, chair), Christian Beks (OIT), Jennifer Carroll (CRCD), Alexandra Fitts (Provost's Office), Kelly Houlton (CRCD/Dev Ed), Duff Johnston (CLA), *Cecile Lardon (CLA)*, Chris Lott (eLearning), Franz Meyer (CNSM), Channon Price (CNSM), Todd Radenbaugh *(CNSM)*, Inna Rivkin (CLA), Sally Skrip (Provost's Office)

Committee affiliates: Ian Olson (PAIR office), Phil Jacobs (OIT)

Summary: During the academic year 2014-15, UAF's ECAI committee has overseen the transition from the IAS students' evaluation of teaching to the electronic Blue system provided by eXplorance. The ECAI committee was successful in building a new questionnaire and identifying a cohort of instructors and courses to recruit during the pilot phase of the electronic survey implementation in Spring 2015.

Meetings of the ECAI committee were held weekly in 304C Eielson. All meetings were well attended and all ECAI members contributed heavily to the rich range of discussions. All meetings were held with working quorums, indicating the activity of the committee during the period covered by this report. During the first meeting, Andrea Ferrante was elected to serve as committee chair for this academic year, whereas Chris Lott was elected as committee's recorder. Details about the activities of the ECAI committee during the 2014-15 academic year are summarized in the following sections of the present report.

General Background and Timeline

In response to a recommendation by the UAF faculty senate, UAF administration has decided to move away from the current on-paper method of assessing student opinions of instruction towards an electronic assessment instrument. The motivation for both the recommendation and the subsequent adoption are summarized in the reports that were submitted by the Electronic Course Evaluation task force over the last two years and can be retrieved at http://www.uaf.edu/files/uafgov/Assessment-of-Electronic-Course-Evaluation-Options-for-UAF_fullReport_final.pdf (2012-2013) and http://www.uaf.edu/files/uafgov/FDAI_year_end_report_2014.pdf (2013-2014).

In summer 2014, UAF signed a contract with eXplorance Blue, who is providing the course evaluation system for UAF.

The Electronic Course Assessment Implementation Committee (ECAI) was constituted in November 2014 as sub-committee of the Faculty Development, Assessment, and Improvement Committee (FDAI). At the time of constitution, the committee was charged with two main tasks: (1) preparing a new course assessment questionnaire for UAF and (2) designing and implementing a pilot application of the software. This work will result in a full implementation of the eXplorance Blue system at UAF in the fall of 2015. Initially, a pilot phase for eXplorance Blue had been planned for the 2015 spring semester, and most of the Committee's focus for this year have been

on coordinating the efforts of all stakeholders to ensure successful execution of the pilot as scheduled.

The committee has been meeting on a weekly basis at 304c Eielson. The ECAI committee has reported to the FDAI committee during its monthly meetings.

Development of the new questionnaire

The ECAI committee was charged with the task of developing a new questionnaire to poll students' evaluation of teaching. This task was required since the questions contained in UAF's legacy forms (provided by IASystems) are copyrighted and cannot be reused in the new questionnaire verbatim. The committee thought that building a new survey would allow for designing a set of questions better tailored to the needs and expectations of students and instructors as compared to those included in the legacy forms. To achieve this goal, the committee reviewed the available literature concerning course evaluation tools. Following critical discussion of the literature, guidelines were established for the formulation of the new questions:

1. The questionnaire should contain questions that support:
    a. The assessment of teaching,
    b. Evaluation of faculty performance for tenure and promotion purposes,
    c. The collection of information for program/institutional accreditation
    d. The assessment of student learning outcomes.
2. The questionnaire ought to assess both teaching and the course in its entirety.
3. Questions ought to assess aspects of teaching and of the course for which students have the competence to respond.
4. Evaluation of the course ought to address the following dimensions:
    a. Learning/value
    b. Organization
    c. Breadth of coverage
    d. Examinations/grading
    e. Assignments/readings
    f. Workload/difficulty.
5. Evaluation of teaching ought to address the following features:
    a. Clarity
    b. Expression
    c. Interaction
    d. Organization
    e. Pacing
    f. Enthusiasm
    g. Speech
    h. Rapport
    i. Teaching Aids.
6. The survey tool ought to include questions shared across courses ("core questions") and add-on questions tailored to the course by the instructor or department chair.
7. Question wording should reach an optimal length/clarity ratio.
8. Space for open-ended questions and comments should be included.
9. The number of questions should be kept as low as possible while fulfilling the requirements 1-6.

In January the committee members reached an agreement on a first draft of the new questionnaire. This initial survey underwent a round of review by ASUAF students at the end of their January 18th meeting. Based on their comments, which were for the most part related to wording and the clarity of the questions, the committee edited the questionnaire. The revised survey underwent a round of peer-reviews. All the UAF instructors potentially evaluated by the new tool were invited to provide their feedback through an *ad hoc* Google document. About 10% of the instructors responded. The committee took in consideration all the comments and revised the survey by modifying questions or integrating suggestions where possible. As of February 20th a questionnaire containing nine core questions, four student-specific questions, and four open-ended questions was finalized (see Appendix 1). This is the questionnaire being adopted in spring 2015 during the pilot phase.

Blue's flexibility allows for the addition of ad hoc questions by instructors and department chairs that can be tailored for specific assessment needs. Whereas similar questions can be personally formulated by each instructor or chair, committee members have agreed on the usefulness of a question bank, from which questions can be selected if appropriate. Thus, during the months of March and April, the committee has been working on building such a question bank, which will be made available starting from fall 2015, for full implementation. The proposed question bank is reported in Appendix 2.

Selection of the cohort for the pilot

The second task of the committee was to identify a representative cohort of courses and students that would reflect the student population and the curricular offering for the purpose of the pilot. The committee agreed on the following set of parameters for the selection of the courses:

1. Population Size and Composition
   a. 10-20% of active courses (students)
2. Course Characteristics
   a. Traditional, hybrid, online
   b. Lab
   c. Disciplines
   d. Schools/colleges
   e. Class size > 5 (with particular respect of traditional courses)
   f. Tenured and term faculty
   g. Volunteers among non-term
   h. Volunteers among adjuncts
3. List of colleges:
   a. CRCD
   b. CTC
   c. CLA
   d. CEM
   e. CNSM
4. List of schools:
   a. SNRE
   b. SOE
   c. SFOS

        d. SOM
5. Library
6. Delivery: electronic format out of class, or in class depending on instructor.
In order to identify courses that would fit the above criteria, we contacted Mr. Ian Olson (PAIR office), who was instrumental in the definition of the cohort targeted by the pilot.

All the 213 e-learning courses have been included in the pilot. A total of 254 non e-learning courses (as identified by their CRN) were initially selected. Instructors from those courses were given the possibility of opting out from the pilot.

Implementation
Starting from February, the committee has worked closely with eXplorance for the implementation of Blue. The collaboration started with a kick-off meeting, in which eXplorance representatives (Mr. Krimo Bouaou, Mr. Robert Wood and Mr. Muthana Kubba) indicated the requirements and the timing for successful execution of the pilot. Two "requirements gathering documents" provided by eXplorance have been completed by the committee and by OIT (Mr. Phil Jacobs), reporting the information needed for building the survey, importing student, instructor and course information into the system, interfacing Blue with UAF BlackBoard, defining access privileges and delivering the survey to users.

      Following the kick-off meeting, eXplorance scheduled a demo to show committee members how Blue operates, its features and settings, and to address any concerns with respect to the survey tool.

      During the months of March and April, weekly conference calls between Dr. Alexandra Fitts, Ms. Sally Skrip, Dr. Andrea Ferrante and Mr. Robert Wood (eXplorance) were held to ascertain the status of the implementation, troubleshoot any arising technical issues, and to exchange information or address concerns, as the project was moving forward.

      After successful construction of the survey tool, uploading of the required information and interfacing with Blackboard (Mr. Jo Knox), Blue was tested by the committee members. Committee's comments were reported to eXplorance, and a finalized version of the survey was ready by Friday, April 17th. The pilot survey was released to students on April 20th and available until May 4th, as scheduled.

      Results of the survey will be made available to instructors on May 18th, after grades have been released.

Outlook into 2015-2016 academic year
Full implementation of Blue in the Fall of 2015 will require additional efforts by the committee in several directions:
1. Finalize the survey tool, include the question bank, and ensure user-friendliness of Blue for creation of customized questions.
2. Cooperate with the Provost's office for training of instructors and to address issues relative to Blue use and function.
3. On the basis of the pilot response rates, and in collaboration with eXplorance, identify strategies to increase students' participation.

4. Organize a second pilot phase during the summer

The committee plans to continue to work on students' evaluation of teaching and exploitation of Blue to strengthen faculty development at UAF and improve the quality and diversity of teaching.

Appendix 1 to ECAI Report – Pilot phase questionnaire

Core questions
Answers: inverted Likert scale

1. The instructor's presentation of the subject matter was clear.

2. The instructor's teaching approach was engaging.

3. The instructor provided useful feedback on students' work.

4. The instructor's methods of evaluating student work were fair.

5. The course materials and activities helped me learn the subject matter.

6. I have a better understanding of the subject matter as a result of this course.

7. I found the course intellectually stimulating.

8. Overall, this course reflected the expectations conveyed by the syllabus and the instructor.

9. Overall, I would recommend this course to a fellow student.

    Summary score of 1 through 9

Student-specific questions
10. In regard to your academic program, is this course best described as:
A core requirement   A requirement in your major   In your major   In your minor   An elective   Other

11. Based on your experience, the difficulty level of this class was
very easy   easy   average   difficult   very difficult

12. Did you feel academically prepared to take the course? Yes/no
Please elaborate

13. On average, how many hours per week have you spent on this course (including attending classes and out-of-class work)
<4   4-7   8-11   12-15   16-19   >19

Open questions
14. What aspects of this course contributed most to your learning?

15. What aspects of this course could be improved?

16. How might this course benefit you (e.g., personally, academically, professionally, etc.)?

17. Other comments with respect to the course.

Appendix 2 to ECAI Report – Add-on questions
The questions in italic will be included in Blue

Physical Environment
The physical environment of the class was conducive to learning.
Noise levels in the classroom were distracting.
The arrangement of student desks or tables in the classroom helped me engage in class activities.
Noise levels outside the classroom were distracting.
Lighting in the classroom was appropriate.
The classroom temperature was appropriate.

Technology
The instructor uses technology in ways that helped my learning of concepts and principles
The integration of Blackboard and other web sites and applications was clear and understandable.
The multimedia (audio, video, and animation) used in the course helped me learn course content.
E-mail discussions were a valuable part of this course
Technology used in this course provides high quality instruction
Video materials were a valuable part of this course
Audio materials were a valuable part of this course
Electronic presentations were a valuable part of this course
Instruction technology is well coordinated with other course materials
Classroom blackboards and/or whiteboards effectively used in classroom activities
Technical support was useful.
The instructor's use of new technology increases my overall learning in this course
Use of the internet was intelligently guided

Pedagogy
Small group activities in class helped me learn course content
Peer-review activities helped me improve my work
Course projects were clearly connected to course content
The instructor provided helpful feedback during course project work
Course projects required a reasonable amount of time and effort to complete
The instructor provided helpful guidance during peer-review activities
Course project guidelines were clearly presented
Course projects helped me learn course content
Course projects were fairly graded
Pair activities in class helped me learn course content
Peer-review activity guidelines were clearly presented

Discussion/Seminar
This course encourages students to learn from each other
Discussions clarify the lecture material well

The instructor raises challenging questions for discussion
I feel encouraged in participating in the discussions
The amount of time dedicated to discussion is adequate
Discussion in this course is stimulating
Discussions are managed so that they help me learn
The instructor is skillful in developing classroom discussion
Discussions are well organized

Skill-Based
Students had the opportunity to practice what they learned.
Course assignments allowed me to use practical skills outside the classroom.
The instructor provided useful feedback during the preparation of student presentations
Student presentations helped me learn course content
Student presentation guidelines were clearly presented
Student presentations required a reasonable amount of time and effort to complete
Student presentations required a reasonable amount of time and effort to complete
Student presentations were graded fairly
Skills taught in the course adequately prepared me to take certification exam

On-Line
The instructor was available to me (via email and/or discussion) for help.
The navigation of the course was clear and understandable.
The process(es) for participating in the class were clear.
The course provided opportunities for me to interact with my peers.
The process(es) for submitting homework were clear.
The instructor's presence and activity in the course contributed significantly to my learning.
What technological problems did you encounter?
Based on this experience, would you take another online course? Why or why not?
Due dates for assignments and/or participation were accurate.
I was clear on where to go for help.
Technical support was useful.

Lab & Field
Laboratory assignments were relevant to what was presented in class
Laboratory assignments made students think
Feedback to laboratory reports was appropriate and constructive
Laboratory assignments were interesting and stimulating
Directions for laboratory assignments were clear and specific
Laboratory assignments required a reasonable amount of time and effort
Laboratory assignments seemed carefully chosen
Laboratory reports were graded fairly
Laboratory reports were returned promptly

Course Organization and Content
Class sessions were well organized.

The organization of course was clearly presented at the beginning of the semester.
Course content was clearly introduced at the beginning of the semester.
Course content was clearly summarized at the end of the semester.

Instructor
The instructor was well-prepared for class.
The instructor encouraged student participation.
The instructor was able to explain things in different ways when necessary.
The instructor encouraged critical thinking about the course content.
The instructor showed interest in student learning.
The instructor used examples effectively in teaching the subject matter.
The instructor was accessible outside of class.
The instructor related course material to real life situations.
The instructor inspired student interest in the subject matter.

General
The use of time in class was appropriate (specific for class type, possible add-on question)
Students felt welcome in seeking help.
The course provided a valuable learning experience.
Assessments covered the course content.
The assignments fit in well with the class topics.