Committee on Academic Technology (CAT)
Annual Report, 2022-2023
Stephanie Aubry, Chair

Duties and Responsibilities

The Committee on Academic Technology has the responsibility under University Rule 3335-5-48.3 to:

(1) Advise the chief information officer in the planning and implementation of academic technology programs and policies, including those pertaining to education, research and service activities.
(2) Assist the university administration in the identification, review, and implementation of academic technology infrastructure.
(3) Advocate for academic technology infrastructure that is inclusive, affordable, accessible, and user-friendly for faculty, students, and staff.
(4) Advise the appropriate administrative office on the appointment of the Chief Information Officer and the Chief Digital Learning Officer.

Committee Membership AY22-23

The committee consists of sixteen members:

(1) eight faculty,
(2) three students:
    a) one graduate student,
    b) one professional student,
    c) one undergraduate student,
(3) four administrators (or their designees):
    a) the Chief Information Officer,
    b) the Vice President for Research,
    c) the Chief Digital Learning Officer
(4) three staff members; two staff members shall be appointed by the university staff advisory committee, and one by the Chief Information Officer

During the 2022–2023 academic year, the membership included:

Faculty, Staff, Students
Stephanie Aubry, Chair, Faculty Council 2023
Curtis "Lynn" Knipe, Faculty Council 2023
Jim Fredal, Faculty Council 2023
Kevin Evans, Faculty Council 2024 (Retired December 2022)
Neelam Soundarajan, Faculty Council 2024
Ralph Greco, Faculty Council 2025
Jane Hammons, Faculty Council 2025
Sabine Jeschonnek, Faculty Council 2025
Abagail Berk, USG 2023
Michael Insko, CGS 2023
Gary Sukienik, IPC 2023
Katie Culbertson, USAC 2024

Administration
Rob Griffiths, Chief Digital Learning Officer (or designee)
Grace Wang, EVP of ERIK (or designee)
Cindy Leavitt, CIO (or designee)

Guests
Several university stakeholders engaged with the committee regularly and offered valuable input. These engaged university partners included:

Jessica Phillips, Director of Learner Innovation and Success, OTDI
Ashley Miller, Associate Director, Affordability and Access, Office of Academic Affairs
John Muir, Director for PCO Programs Design and Support, Office of Academic Affairs
Travis Ritter, Director of Learning Systems, OTDI
Lisa Rice, eLearning and Technology Senior Analyst, Innovation Management, OTDI
Tiffany Hsich, USG

Administrative support
We are also grateful for the assistance and expertise of Sonya Kimball, of who served as the committee secretary.

Transition from DELIT to CAT (Spring 2022)
The Committee on Distance Education, Libraries and Information Technology (DELIT) was disbanded in Summer 2022, and two new committees were created: the Libraries Committee and the Committee on Academic Technology (CAT). The DELIT meeting om March 3, 2022 was devoted to a focus group on next steps for distance education and online learning at Ohio State. This focus group provided insight into the topics for the new Committee on Academic Technology to prioritize. Comments are summarized below.

> *Desire to see online learning done well*. Recognizing the benefits of online– "The courses that worked well, worked really well" - faculty mentioned points of frustration and need to support. "People think they know what online learning is and they don't. There are a lot of courses that are online, and they don't have engagement opportunities." "Courses have to be redesigned for engagement." "Online is the catch all of everything not in person. That is not an accurate picture of what online should be." "Need instructional design support across campus."

> Several members expressed confusion and a need for clarity regarding what is DE and online learning. "The current modes of learning definitions were enacted in summer 2014." "The complexity and shared number of options is overwhelming."

> *Students like the flexibility of online.* "Obvious flexibility benefits to students." "Students want flexibility in their learning spaces." "Asynchronous class – can change view speed or watch multiple times." "Can have speakers from all over the country and eliminate travel costs."

Does online work well for all students? "Need a better understanding of what an online environment means for less achieving students and those who lack technology access." "Some students aren't built for online'"

Where does online learning fit in a course or a program? When is it important to be in-person? What is the mix of online and in-person in a hybrid course/program? Example: Health and Rehabilitation Services' new online degree completion program. The program includes many non-traditional students who are well into careers in imaging sciences. Often, they perform well in online coursework. In-person students in the program tend to not engage as well in online coursework when required. These students believe the online courses are overdesigned and have too much work."

How do we address this as an enterprise? "Getting lots of contacts from vendors offering online solutions?" "Growing number of companies selling tools to individuals or units which bifurcates what we are trying to do at the enterprise level."

Do we know what students want and what they value? "Where are students valuing their experiences with Ohio State? Students have valued experiences in classrooms and on campus." "Important to get more voices informing strategic planning. Suggest looking at enrollment data to see which modes of delivery are more popular." "Parents in social media groups have perspectives that online courses are inferior to in person classes."

CAT Meetings in AY2022 – 2023
The committee met 8 times during the 2022-23 academic year: September 12, 2022, October 3, 2022, November 7, 2022, December 5, 2022, January 9, 2023, February 6, 2023, March 6, 2023, and April 3, 2023

Topics and Activities in AY2022-2023

Topic: Digital Flagship
On April 26, 2022, Provost Gilliam communicated the decision to immediately discontinue providing iPads to the university community through the Digital Flagship program. Other changes in the DF program, including strategies for providing access to software and devices for students, can be found here: https://digitalflagship.osu.edu/about/all-faq.

In AY22-23, a key focus of CAT was listening to the concerns of students and faculty regarding the discontinuation of the iPad program and monitoring the accessibility of loaner devices for Pell-eligible students, and for students registered in iPad-required courses.

Included below are preliminary data presented to CAT during the October 2023 meeting regarding student access to technology, and updated data provided to the CAT Chair in April 2023 (many thanks to Rob Griffiths for providing these data).

Data presented to CAT in October 2023 regarding student access to technology (information was collected in September 2023):

- Number of students identified that are eligible for a loaner device: 5,927 students
    - 5,655 students (95.4% of eligible) are eligible due to need for curricular continuity and enrollment in a defined iPad course
    - 272 students (4.6% of eligible) are eligible because they are tech insecure. These students have been identified via OTDI with:
        - Regional campus leadership
        - Advisors
        - Student Advocacy Center
        - Office of Disability Services
        - Student Life
        - Program managers for student groups (e.g., Young Scholars Program; learning communities)
- Number of students that received loaner devices: 2,811 students (47.4% of eligible)
    - 2,714 students (96.5% of loans) are enrolled in a defined iPad course received iPads kits
    - 97 students (3.5% of loans) are tech insecure and received Surface Go 3 kits

Additional notes
- Loaner devices are provided for one semester
- Students that are part of the Digital Flagship 1:1 program still have access to AppleCare+ for their DF device

Data regarding the Student Technology Loan Program (STLP) (information collected in April 24, 2023):

iPad Required Courses
- Number of "iPad Required" in Autumn 2022
    - Sections: 749
    - Distinct Courses: 44
- Number of "iPad Required" in Spring 2023
    - Sections: 501
    - Distinct Courses: 52

Loaner Devices: Students Eligible and Devices Distributed
- 6,152 students are currently flagged as "Loan Eligible" for the Student Technology Loan Program.
    - 5,380 via Course Enrollment in an iPad required course.
    - 772 via Advisor, Advocate, or Group referral.
- Loaners Distributed (e.g., number of students who have chosen to receive a kit):
    - 2,580 iPad kits
    - 107 Surface Go 3 kits

- Since the Program Launched:
    - 3,985 students have received a loan device (this includes those students who had received a loan device through Digital Flagship prior to STLP)
    - 6,263 loans have been provided (including those students who have received more than 1 loan device – either due to needing to change devices or returning after Autumn to receive a new loan for Spring)

Virtual Desktop (VDI) Usage and Availability, as of April 8, 2023
- 5,655 students have accessed the VDI platform 80,535 times since 9/7/2022.
- Available software listed below.
    - Adobe Creative Cloud including Photoshop, Illustrator, InDesign, Premier Pro, After Effects, Lightroom, Premier Rush, Animate, Acrobat Pro
    - Microsoft products including Microsoft Word, Microsoft Access, Microsoft Excel, Microsoft PowerPoint, Microsoft OneDrive, Microsoft Teams, Microsoft Publisher, Microsoft Project (for educational purposes only), Microsoft Visio (for educational purposes only)
    - Others:
        - FastX
        - Matlab
        - Minitab (web version; Minitab access requires account approval. Learn more about requesting access on the Site Licensed Software page.)
        - SAS
        - SPSS
        - Visual Studio Code

Topic: Improving Digital Learning
The DELIT March 3, 2022 meeting was devoted to a focus group on next steps for distance education and online learning at Ohio State. This focus group gave DELIT members an opportunity to recommend topics for the new Committee on Academic Technology to prioritize in Ay 22-23. During this meeting, members of DELIT shared their desire to see online learning done well, and the need for instructional design support across campus.

To this end, CAT invited Jessica Philips, Director of Learning Innovation and Success for OTDI, to three meetings in Autumn 2023. Jessica gave presentations, moderated discussions, and posed questions to CAT members regarding challenges instructors and students face with respect to online learning, and future areas for improvement. Jessica's goal was to share information to help empower instructors to improve their Carmen courses without overprescribing.

As part of her position in OTDI, Jessica had listening sessions with OSU undergraduates outside of the CAT meetings. The undergraduates shared what they would like to see in their online classes, which is summarized below.

- A set of fundamental, basic standards for a consistent student online learning experience
- Desire for Carmen classrooms to "feel" like an OSU space that encourage belonging to the community
- Emphasis on real-world activities that allow for the practice of skills that align to careers

- Instructors in online courses are required to receive baseline training, support, and development in the delivery of online instruction
- Courses should be designed in consultation with resources and/or experts in online learning
- When possible, course materials and software are provided from open resources at a low or no cost and are deeply integrated into course and across a program
- Courses and instructors can enable well-being by:
  - providing structure to course delivery and due dates with space for flexibility
  - intentionally building personal awareness of the student populations served
  - consistently centering courses on well-being with resources and empathy

During our meetings, CAT members shared the following challenges and instructor needs related to teaching online:

- The need for strategies for connecting with students asynchronously
- The need for resources for finding affordable course materials
- The need for Canvas experts within every college/department to assist instructors in designing their online courses
- Time constraints that prevent instructors from gaining expertise in Canvas and designing online courses, particularly for faculty with heavy teaching loads or research requirements
- Need for transparency regarding the lifecycle of hardware/software to assure that the instructor's investment of time is worthwhile
- Clarity on expectations for designing online courses and accountability related to online teaching

Based on our conversations, Jessica offered the following recommendations for improving the online learning experience for students and instructors. These recommendations included resources that could benefit instructors, and best practices for teaching online:

- Templates for designing online courses that balance consistency and flexibility
- Checklists of standard practices (the "what," and ideas for the "how")
- Accountability and quality assurances for online courses

Additionally, Jessica posed the following focus questions to the members of CAT:

- How can we help bridge the distance between a high-level idea and realistic, actionable steps forward, without over-prescribing?
- How can we address the issue of time and focus, knowing instructors want learners to have a positive experience and to have a positive experience themselves?

Topic: Access and Affordability Efforts at OSU
Ashley Miller, Associate Director of Affordability and Access for OTDI, visited CAT in February to share information about the Affordable Learning Exchange (ALX) at OSU, and issues impacting student access to affordable course materials.

Ashley shared that textbook prices have risen more than 1,000% since the 1970s. In general, the largest publishers tend to have the most expensive textbooks. Any course that requires a physical textbook tends to range from $50-$200. There are STEM students spending $100 or more to buy lab supplies and website tools or subscriptions (e.g., PackBack) in addition to textbooks. For art students, materials and technology like paints and high-quality cameras are all necessary and expensive.

Ohio State students have shared that they struggle to afford textbooks. They often purchase textbooks late in the semester, share textbooks, or choose not to take a course due to high textbook costs. It is important to note that, with eTexts and graded online workbooks, students are not able to share access codes and must purchase the eTexts individually. Between 10 and 20% of OSU students report having had to choose between food and course materials, and more than 60% report that they have skipped buying a book for a course.

ALX is a partnership across OAA support units, including OTDI, the University Libraries, and the Drake Institute for Teaching and Learning. As of February 2023, the ALX grant program had funded 42 racial justice teaching grants that have saved more than $36 million in textbook costs by helping instructors incorporate open educational resources (OERs) into their syllabi. ALX also partners with Scarlet & Gray Advantage, which helps OSU students graduate debt-free.

CarmenBooks had saved students more than $22 million as of February 2023 by reducing the costs of textbooks. Courses leveraging CarmenBooks are labeled in OSU's registration system, but this not easily seen by students in Buckeyelink when they register.

USG has developed a mini grant to reduce costs for student access codes for eTexts to encourage instructors to work through ALX. USG also reports that more than 100 students have registered for the textbook exchange, which was started in Spring 2023.

In AY22-23, Ohio State Newark Campus piloted a series of math course that uses free, open-access textbooks. ALX is exploring a similar partnership with English at our Newark Campus.

Key problems that became clear during CAT's conversation with ALX are:

- OSU does not have clear data regarding which instructors use OERs (e.g., OpenStax) in their courses. ALX has sent surveys to instructors, but ALX only has data from the instructors that choose to respond.
  - Barnes & Noble does have more comprehensive data regarding OERs but will not share the data with OSU.
- ALX is working to make affordable options transparent at the time of student registration. However, this is a complicated process.
- Many OSU courses are not using CarmenBooks. It is free and easy for instructors and departments to make courses "CarmenBooks courses," which reduces textbook costs for students significantly. Reasons for which instructors are not using CarmenBooks include:
  - State law requires that instructors select a textbook before students register. However, there is low compliance with this law.

- Some instructors, particularly associated faculty and GTAs, are assigned courses late.
  - It is not possible for these instructors to select a book prior to the opening of registration windows. In this case, the department should elect a textbook and register it with the university.
  - These instructors may be unaware of their options regarding CarmenBooks. In this case, CAT advises that the instructor's department should elect to use CarmenBooks whenever possible.

CAT advises that the current system of implementing CarmenBooks on an instructor-by-instructor basis is not efficient or effective. OSU could improve course affordability by streamlining this process and increasing student awareness of CarmenBooks.

CAT also advises that the cost of course materials should be available to students at the time of registration (e.g., by listing textbook costs and identifying free and low-cost courses in Buckeyelink), to empower students to make good financial decisions regarding their education.

Topic: Learning Tools and Systems at OSU
Travis Ritter, Director of Learning Systems for OTDI, and Lisa Rice, eLearning Technology Senior Analyst for Innovation Management at OTDI, visited CAT in March and April to discuss the educational technology tools being used at an enterprise level, and how the decentralization of toolsets can cause problems for students, faculty and staff. Currently there are 20+ tools being supported centrally at OSU, with variance in their actual usage across the university. Each tool complies with OSU's security and accessibility requirements, and they add no extra fees for students or academic units. With these tools, there is also a centralized location for technology support and documentation.

OTDI recognizes that colleges have additional needs for niche technology applications that are not included in OSU's toolset (e.g., H5P and Examsoft), and colleges can decide not to use the enterprise tools available and use their own. At times this has led to similar yet distinct tools being used by different colleges or departments. Mediasite, Echo360 and Panopto are examples. Non-enterprise tools still need to go through security and accessibility approval processes. However, there is no central mechanism to assure the quality of non-enterprise tools at OSU, and there is no central place for instructors or students to get support for non-enterprise tools.

Allowing different units to utilize decentralized toolsets can cause several problems, including:

- students feeling overwhelmed with inconsistent tool use across courses, since there is too much variety and students do not know where to go for help
- increased time for instructors and staff to learn how to use multiple tools
- difficulty in confirming or fully controlling accessibility and security compliance for non-enterprise tools
- increased costs for departments and students as vendors charge higher prices when going through individual units
- inefficient use of university resources and administrative overhead
- security and privacy risks, as each new tool added means more risk of a breach

These factors greatly impact the student experience since students tend to desire standard, predictable experiences with educational technology and greater transparency of the costs associated with their education.

OTDI would like to move toward:

- more OAA coordination of the enterprise toolset,
- increased collaboration and visibility into college purchases,
- shared understanding of the high costs of using non-standard tools, and
- reviews of college purchases by an IT oversight committee

This IT oversight committee would be a group of faculty, staff, and IT professionals that could collaborate and raise the visibility of non-enterprise tools. This would increase efficiency and foster the best student experience possible. The committee would help colleges share information about the tools they are using, and it would share information about security and accessibility. This would also allow OTDI to understand when interest in a tool gets to a level in which it would best function as an enterprise tool. Ideally, the oversight committee would have decision-making ability. During the CAT meeting, the question was raised as to whether the IT Partnership Council (ITPC) could serve in this oversight and decision-making role.

Transition to 2023-2024 year
Following the April 2022 meeting, CAT members completed an online Qualtrics survey, conducted by Sonya Kimball, to vote on CAT leadership: Stephanie Aubry, Chair (no other CAT members expressed interest in serving as Chair or Vice Chair). In Autumn 2023, Stephanie Aubry will begin requesting nominations and self-nominations for the AY24-25 CAT Chair and Vice Chair positions.

The 2022-2023 academic year was CAT's first year as a committee. During our last meeting of the year, CAT members expressed interest in the committee's continued role in meeting with stakeholders and receiving information regarding education technology at OSU, and for finetuning its areas of focus during the 2023-2024 academic year.