CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, EAST BAY  
COMMITTEE ON BUDGET AND RESOURCES ALLOCATION  

Approved Minutes of the COBRA Meeting of Friday, March 13, 2009  

Members Present: Jeanette Bicais, Kris Erway, Judith Faust, Armando Gonzales, Janet Logan, Nancy Mangold, Sue Opp (Chair), Eric Suess, Steve Ugbah, Ke Zou  

Members absent: Dennis Chester  

Guests: Linda Dobb, Jodi Servatius, Michelle-Pacansky-Brock (via telephone)  

1. Approval of the agenda – MSA  

2. Approval of the minutes of the last meeting (2/20/2009)  
One of the Presidential appointees said that in regard to a question asked of Chris Brown by Dr. Liberti, the minutes seemed to give an impression that there was a “grab” of facilities rental funds from departments, whereas the administration sees it as more trying to equalize and centralize the funds, looking at it more from a University-wide perspective. It was asserted that the facilities actually belong to the University as a whole, after all. Discussion ensued whether the minutes should be changed, when they represented accurately the question and answer given. It was decided that the minutes should reflect what was said at the meeting, and that the minutes of this meeting should reflect the discussion. The minutes were approved, MSA.  

3. Report of the Chair  
Chair Opp said that our next meeting will be on April 10, and after that, April 24. She reminded us that what would normally be our May 1 meeting time has been given to UPABC, since the Provost has difficulty meeting at any other time. May 15 will be the organizational meeting for next year’s committee.  

4. Report of the Presidential Appointee(s)  

5. Old Business  
Because Michelle Pacansky-Brock had time constraints, we moved 5b ahead of 5a.  

b. Referral from ExCom: analysis of budget implications of the President’s online initiative - invited guests Michelle Pacansky-Brock (via phone), Linda Dobb, and Jodi Servatius.  
Michelle Pacansky-Brock was contacted via telephone. One of her first recommendations was 24/7/365 Blackboard support for both students and faculty. She said there is a shift starting to move toward consortial pricing for outsourcing help desk services. With a move to more online courses, the number of technical support-oriented phone calls and emails from students and faculty increases drastically, especially in off-hours – institutional design folks shouldn’t be spending their time doing this.
Ms. Pacansky-Brock said she thinks the multimedia aspect of online teaching is critical for engaging students. They are essentially isolated from fellow students (and instructor), which is why many think there is a higher dropout rate for online students. She named several emerging tools to engage students. Accessibility is an important issue, she cautioned. She mentioned Mediasite, a web communications and content management system for lecture capture which splits the screen, allowing students to see a PowerPoint, and view the professor at the same time, with close captioning of video. Another tool mentioned was SoftChalk, an easy-to-use tool which enables the creation of interactive web-based modules with images. She also mentioned VoiceThread, where the instructor can create images and students can respond, and even come in with their own cams.

Ms. Pacansky-Brock said that the ideal situation is an established training program that would be mandatory before tackling online teaching, but there needs to be consensus on what CSUEB online programs will look like. She would also recommend a mentor program – identify faculty passionate about online teaching so they can bolster training. A question was asked about training, whether that was envisioned as internal or external. Pacansky-Brock replied internal, on-campus, in fact the group that she will be heading – she sees this as concerned with IT, but pedagogy has to be integral to it.

She said that for the big picture it’s important to think about the campus – how to promote “the Campus” and give a sense of community. Here’s where Web 2.0 comes in – there are so many Web 2.0 tools that make it fairly easy to build community. There ought to be online student resources – online counseling, online tutoring, an online writing center. She also mentioned Ning – a social networking tool that is closed and people are invited to join the network. Each person has his/her own page to populate. There could be special groups for each major, department, events.

A question was raised about student access – if we use very sophisticated technologies, do students have the technology to handle them? Pacansky-Brock said that in many places with online programs, there are requirements as to skillsets for students, and functionality of technology. Statements such as: “Students must have high-speed internet access,” are put into catalogs.

Related to that, Pacansky Brock said that many times, students have no idea what an online class will consist of. She sees it as important to communicate to students what online classes will be like before they register. For her classes, she created her own web page at GoogleSites where she had captioned video of what her classes would be like, what she expects of students. This is a technical issue, too – online schedule could have online profiles with links to the online catalog.

Next, Jodi Servatius, Interim Dean of CEAS, spoke, and she said these things need to happen to support an online program well:

- All Academic processes – forms to change grades, etc., all need to be online – we’re not there yet.
- Support for faculty – new online courses development time is more extensive than for onsite courses. There are no resources at the college level to provide assigned time for development. She suggested we should take advantage of the Online Teaching and Learning folks – there are 350
alums, many of whom would be happy to serve as mentors, developers, and teaching associates.

- Library – it is essential for the Library to have online resources. Online students are not all in this time zone, either, and Servatius said she is impressed with the Library’s 24/7 reference service.

- IT – it’s their responsibility to maintain the CMS (Blackboard, currently) so that it doesn’t crash – reliability is critical.

- We need a 24/7 help desk – we don’t even have close to that! (Discussion ensued regarding the step backward that the “open a ticket” seems to be. It was said that it is not just other time zones – IT needs to move to another level even for those on campus.)

- Business Division – we seem to be farther along on self-service online for our business functions (applying, paying, registering, etc.), but we need to serve all students online. Information should always be available.

- Student Services has begun an online transfer orientation program, which should be expanded. She thought we could provide clubs (film club, book club) for online students, as well, with faculty moderators & social networking; each new student should get a call from someone on campus (such as a program Student Service Professional).

She also mentioned examples of universities that have at least one half-time Student Services Professional per program.

She also wondered who is doing outreach and marketing for online programs. How, for instance, would you know there’s a Human Development online degree at CSUEB if you live in Temecula?

She said that from a dean’s point of view, there’s neither a huge financial stake required for online programs, nor any particular savings, but at the university level certain services are absolutely required, such as a reliable CMS and Helpdesk. You don’t save money on instruction, but you do have infrastructure costs that would be saved on – not as much parking, or classrooms, heating, etc., needed when you grow online programs. She said online programs shouldn’t be used as a dumping ground for big classes, however.

One of the Presidential appointees said that another example is business processing - there is an assumption that professors can come in to sign papers in HR or Payroll, etc. In fact, online faculty can be scattered all over the world. “Bring your social security card,” is also not applicable if you don’t have one – i.e., you are not a U.S. citizen – either for faculty or students.

A question was raised as to how to ensure quality of online classes, and Servatius said that applied to all classes, not just online. She also mentioned having “visited” online classes at the invitation of a faculty member asking for a letter reviewing his online teaching. She is invited to a Blackboard class for a week to observe, and she also tells students they can email her about the class.

Linda Dobb, University Librarian, spoke next. She emphasized that when the Library budget is cut, online databases will be cut, because they are what take up most of the Library budget these days. She said the Library is working with CEAS on the Ed.D. program. She also mentioned that if science programs move online,
resources are very expensive, and not just for the Library but for students – online labs kits are a difficult proposition, and can be tricky to implement.

Dobb said that the expense of library resources to support online learning will depend on the levels of online instruction we offer. Remedial courses will not need many library resources but upper division, masters, and doctoral work will need increasingly specialized databases.

Dobb said the Library is working on a Library orientation for online students. She also mentioned that SCAA (Student Center for Academic Achievement) has created its own OWL (Online Writing Lab) featuring online submission of papers.

Other thoughts – the Library is working ID’s for online students. The Library already has 24/7 Reference, staffed by librarians all over the country – could IT folk not also come up with something similar, or could the tech and library resources combine on 24/7 service somehow?

Currently, streaming videos are purchased individually at each campus – we need to think of purchasing these things systemwide to get economies of scale. Dobb wondered if we shouldn’t be negotiating prices for textbooks for online learners. Do we want the Library to make textbooks available? A discussion ensued on how publishers sometimes sell parts of textbooks. One point was made regarding international students - Chinese students usually do not have credit cards, only work with cash.

One member mentioned the Library is a hybrid model now, and that many faculty don’t know what’s available online via the Library. The newer faculty all use electronic handouts, and put lots of things online. Other COBRA members chimed in re: their own use of online handouts, and using Wikis now instead of poster board sessions.

5a. Ongoing discussion of Cabinet’s budget proposal for 09-10 from UPABC meeting 3/6/09.

The next UPABC meeting will be April 3. Not much has changed, and there is not as much detail in the new budget most of us saw for the first time at the Faculty Forum. The next step is the deans are working on the “Effects” list.

Chair Opp reiterated that in our next meeting on April 10, we will work on the online initiative draft report. She mentioned that we cannot delay – that we need to report to the Senate on the online initiative this Spring, and cannot wait until Fall.

6. Adjournment – MSA

Respectfully submitted,

Judith Faust
COBRA Secretary