UC RIVERSIDE | College of Natural & Agricultural Sciences

Executive Committee

29 January 2021

To: Jason Stajich, Chair
Riverside Division

From: Theodore Garland, Jr., Chair, Executive Committee
College of Natural and Agricultural Science

Re: Systemwide Review: Report Review: Innovative Learning Technology Initiative (ILTI) Review

The CNAS Executive Committee reviewed this review of the ILTI program and had MANY comments. I am going to sign just below and then list them below my signature. The comments are a mixture of what we discussed in the Executive Committee and feedback that we solicited from individual departments, via their representatives. The order of presentation is somewhat random, and it does not much follow the five questions posed.

Sincerely,

Ted Garland

Views of the ILTI program varied widely among individual faculty and among departments. Some had essentially never heard of the program whereas others had received grants.

The mission of ILTI seems to have shifted over time. originally, it seems that ILTI was oriented towards developing online versions of large "gateway" courses that were impacted by large enrollments and that would be useful to have available across campuses. More recently, it seems that grants are given for courses that have no intention of being made available for cross-campus enrollment, and even for some that are not even hybrids, let alone fully online. We saw no explanation for this mission creep, nor any justification for it.

We also noted that changes in the goals of ILTI have not been communicated to faculty who might want to participate. some were turned off by the initial requirements, and never thought to apply later when requirements may have become more attuned to their needs.

This apparently shifting goals of ILTI had some effects on what people thought of the program, via expectations and experiences.

The Report Review that we wren given seemed like something of a whitewash.

We agreed that a lack of coordination at department or program levels was suboptimal.

The report seems to overstate the effectiveness with which the on-line classes they supported have been made available system-wide, both in terms of outreach and mechanics (campus approval, cross-campus enrolling). Our experience is that this has not been done effectively. It appears that only a few hundred students a year enroll through the $13M CCES and complete their course. That is the size of one large gateway class at one campus in one quarter.

Some grant recipients noted continuing trouble with getting cross-campus students enrolled. This seems to occur EVERY quarter, even in courses that have been going for years. Why can't the folks up north get their act together?

A lack of consistency in the software systems and procedures of the registrars on different campuses is a hindrance to ILTI's goals.

ILTI has done little or none of the legwork to advertise courses across other campuses and, perhaps even more importantly, they have not worked to get courses articulated across campuses. This is a huge impediment that must be dealt with directly by ILTI, not individual instructors.

There is also the feeling that this centralized program has been less effective than campus-based learning technology programs at supporting the development of on-line classes.

Some thought that most (more than the recommended 60%) of the funding

should go to the campuses through block grants. The Systemwide Competition seems to have had limited successful thus far, and we would not expect that to change in the future.

We agree that a better role for this UCOP office might be coordinating systemwide instructional technology efforts – by taking some of the burden off the campuses (e.g., negotiating systemwide licensing), not by creating more work for them (imposing best practices that are unfunded mandates).

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS FROM INDIVIDUAL FACULTY FOLLOW:

Note that some faculty found it difficult to differentiate opinions between ILTI per se, which provides funds with varying amounts of strings attached, and the local UCR resources (e.g., our learning technologists, now called XCITE) who help them (spend the money).

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Well, in regards to supporting the development of online classes in general, I think it has been effective. The program has certainly given me more than adequate resources to develop high quality online learning materials. However, my understanding is the program was intended to create courses that could be taken by students from across the UC system. My sense is that it has not achieved that goal. Part of the problem lies in the fact many institutions created duplicate courses (e.g., UC Irvine created an online prep chem course, so why would their students bother to take mine?). Beyond that, you then need to get buy-in from departments at other campuses to endorse/promote courses created by someone else, and I think that is rare (if it happens at all). I had a colleague at UCLA who tried to get her department to have their students take my prep chem course, but they never did endorse the idea and I got no more than a dozen or so students from their camps to take my course.

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I think the program does a good job of supporting development of online materials, but the problem is getting students from other campuses to take our classes. In-person lab requirements are a limitation for STEM classes. Not sure if this is related to online classes/ILTI courses, but other UCs also don't seem to accept transfer credit from UCR without a lot of hoops to jump through. Their emphasis with time has moved to strictly online courses;

which limits what we can do. Though with the transition to emergency remote instruction I wonder if students will be more interested in online learning in the future... how does UCOP leverage that?

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I heard the campus stopped getting the license for Playposit. My colleague wrote: "they extended the license until the end of the [Fall 2020] quarter. Afterwards, I will be able to use my bulbs, but only if I move videos into YouTube and relink them.
Also, I will lose BlackBoard integration and if I want to share it with students, I will need to pay them $144/year for a professional license (the free license limits the number of students that can use bulbs).

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The offering should be in coordination with local department needs and development. I also am concerned whether the last question regarding the governing structure is the beginning of a discussion on a virtual campus.

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The courses I developed with my ILTI grant (for Math 6A/6B) are courses that I also designed for in person classes and I coordinate all 6A/6B sections. Given that I coordinate the courses already, developing the sequence with me for the ILTI was essentially developing it with the department. Similarly, other coordinated courses/sequences potentially could then be (and certainly some are) developed with more impact than an individual faculty member's courses.

Pro+Mixed: The funding was very helpful in getting some time to develop a way to transition courses to a hybrid/online environment as well as to purchase necessary technology for this transition. Reflecting upon my application, I wish I had applied for more money for me and those in my department to develop the materials as this was a much more significant time investment than I anticipated. While theoretically money can be transferred between different categories in the grant, I have been told that doing so would likely reduce the overall grant funding and so have not investigated that further.

Pro: I am very glad that I had already spent significant time developing 6A/B

to be hybrid before the pandemic as I was able to smoothly transition the courses for me and all the sequence (6A/B) instructors to the online interface at the start of the pandemic.

Con: Several times the recommended tools (such as those used for video hosting) by ILTI technologists to use to share with students changed, which then caused extra work if those tools were used. Choosing tools more carefully and sticking with them would make them more usable. Especially choosing ones that faculty can expect to have access to indefinitely. I was concerned about this issue and chose not to use those tools -- instead I used ones associated to my UCR Gmail account so that I would not encounter this issue that I correctly was concerned about.

Pro: The technology staff who helped me set up the green screen and select technology for creating my own videos were very helpful. Setting up a usable green screen lab was more cost effective than having a UCR videographer film and edit the videos.

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There are good and bad things to be said. As a matter of fact, most of what I have to say is about XCITE (the service on campus that, among other things, is supposed to help people with ILTI grants do their ILTI-funded projects).

ILTI provides funding for developing but once you are done developing, it is the campus that is supposed to sustain whatever you developed. As you can imagine, a big portion of the funding goes to XCITE. I was able to cut that down significantly because I do my own video editing (it is quicker than verifying everything edited by people who do not understand the material), and YouTube now does an excellent job generating closed captions (they are no worse than close captions produced by "professionals"; they need to be edited by so are human-generated ones). So, basically, the only thing I need from XCITE is the filming studio.

But even that can be a disaster sometimes. In Summer 2019 we were filming for MATH131. The workflow we used for MATH011 was that I would get the raw footage within a couple of days after filming and would go over it to make sure that everything was fine and nothing needed to be retaken. This time they gave me the footage more than a month after we were done filming. It turned out that 70% of what we filmed was recorded without

sound. That is, the student employed by XCITE verified that he can hear us in the headphones, but did not verify that the sound was actually being recorded. So, essentially we will have to redo all that again.

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AES faculty generally do not have time to generate system-wide courses. There is a difference between appointments in AES and not in AES. Administration wants all faculty to think that all faculty positions in the college are created equally but that is not correct. There is a difference for faculty members truly working in agriculture and dealing with commodities (state national, international), federal programs (like IR-4), state and federal regulators (DPR, EPA), USDA, NSF etc. grant proposals, and reviews etc. as well as already fulfilling teaching responsibilities in split appoints between OR and I&R.

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Online courses are not how to teach plant pathology or any biology class. In the last year, many faculty members experienced first-hand teaching upper division biology classes that use microscopes and dissecting scopes through zoom. It is a difficult task that results in poor training of students.

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The forms need to be more clear about the incentives. Most faculty would view this like a grant proposal and want to know the extent of funding involved. In the attached documents it was difficult to find this information. The program needs to have a broader perspective on the different types of faculty, ways to motivate faculty in different departments and disciplines, and generally more creative or open.

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I interacted very little with the UCOP/ILTI people but used the resources to pay for consulting with the Learning Center at UCR, for some equipment that I used to make the videos, and summer salary support for updating content. As part of the terms of the grant we have to offer cross-campus enrollment in our course for at least five years during the normal term (if memory serves). The grant application process was straightforward enough. My understanding is that in recent years they are allocating less money for

newer proposals, however.

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It's helped me a lot to improve my CBNS 124 course. It provided money for instructional designers (IDs) that helped with all kinds of tasks: filming my live presentations, editing and captioning video lectures I made on power point using Camtasia, using special programs like Play posit to embed questions into video lectures and syncing with gradebook (there were problems). They also helped with creating exams online, using/troubleshooting CANVAS, etc. One of IDs also helped create clinical correlate mini-lectures as well which improved the course. Finally, we are working on making mini-experiments held in discussion fully online. Work in progress.

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The ILTI program is excellent overall, should be continued and expanded, but it certainly is not perfect. Here are some comments below.
1. The financial impact cannot be understated. I had the luxury of paying for GSRs to help develop the course, paying Instructional Designers to help use best practices, paying (someone) for recording time on high-demand equipment. ... This type of funding makes creating high-quality online education much easier.
2. There's no formal campus support to help manage a substantial operation, at least in my case with two high- enrollment courses.
3. The cross-campus enrollment process has been problematic this quarter.
4. There are not enough Instructional Designers and recording equipment across campus. This became more apparent when everyone needed help moving to online instruction.
5. Having an ILTI helped me better teach all my courses online during the pandemic. I also felt like sharing some of my experiences was valuable to the rest of the department and broader college as part of a 'CNAS Remote Instruction Workgroup'.
6. Mainly because of the pandemic, we are trying to do too much too quickly. As a result technology tools my ILTI was counting on have been turned off in favor of newer (better?) tools. This can cause massive disruptions when everything is delivered online. Some tools have also not been fully vetted (or are overwhelmed).