



Davis Division Academic Senate

Request for Consultation Responses

SmartSite Concern

February 25, 2011

This item is being forwarded for review by Committee on Information Technology. Our colleagues in College of Letters and Science have raised concern about SmartSite. CIT is asked to review in order to inform and advise the Executive Council in early spring quarter. Undergraduate and Graduate Councils are asked to review and provide input to CIT. All committee comments collected by the assigned response date will be forwarded to inform CIT's review as well.

Council of School & College Faculty Chairs (BIOLOGICAL SCIENCES)

February 24, 2011 10:07 AM

We endorse the concerns expressed by colleagues in L&S. Many of our faculty and staff have experienced similar difficulties with SmartSite, and particularly with the gradebook functions and help documentation. It has been very discouraging for us that the smoothly-functioning gradebook in MyUCDavis was withdrawn in order to compel use of the much less-effective SmartSitesystem.

Elections, Rules & Jurisdiction

February 24, 2011 4:25 PM

No response at this time.

Graduate Council

February 18, 2011 1:31 PM

Graduate Council agrees with the concerns and frustrations expressed by the faculty of L&S. Based on their document, and on Council members' experience with SmartSite, the grade-keeping function is clearly inadequate. Council members expressed that they have received numerous complaints from students that they couldn't access their individual grades (for individual assignments) and only received one single cumulative grade as the course advanced.

Council recommends that SmartSite should direct users to the other means of grade submission available through the Registrar's Office together with a notice that the grade-keeping component is not yet fully functional.

Additionally, Council members feel it is inappropriate to have instructors and graduate teaching assistants unwittingly serving as alpha- or beta-testers of very buggy and often poorly designed software. It's a typical situation of investing resources into something new for newness sake when the old system was fine. The original GradeBook was easy to manage, worked well, and was vastly superior to the SmartSite one, which has no improvements over the old system and is, in fact, a big step backward.

Planning & Budget

February 25, 2011 11:20 AM

CPB has reviewed the document "SmartSite Concern." In June 2005, a CCFIT sub-committee made a recommendation on the adoption of new course management tools (http://ccfit.ucdavis.edu/reports/2004-2005/Jun05_Course.Management.Report.pdf). Several comments from that document are very relevant to the present discussion. The sub-committee stated that:

"The new course management tool system must, at a minimum, supply what is currently available on MyUCDavis."

Regarding the Gradebook component of the recommended Sakai system, the committee said:

"2) Gradebook

This is a critical component. The current version has many strengths and features that make it attractive for use."

As can be seen in the comments in the "SmartSite Concern" document, neither of these requirements was fulfilled. Citing budget concerns for ignoring a critical component of the teaching mission is not acceptable. Furthermore, this example of faculty frustration highlights an ongoing concern of CPB, that changes are being made for 'budgetary' or 'strategic' reasons, changes that damage the main mission of the university, without assessing or addressing that effect. The Chancellor has noted that since we are making students pay more we should not offer them less. SmartSite is an example of an acquisition that costs more and offers less.

Undergraduate Council

February 24, 2011 4:33 PM

The Academic Senate Undergraduate Council reviewed the letter from College of Letters and Science faculty about Smart Site concerns. While the UGC acknowledged there are issues with Smart Site, there was considerable disagreement about the significance of many of these. The UGC recommends the formation of an ad hoc committee representative of SmartSite users, CIT and the CCFIT to identify the issues and write up their recommendations.