

Boulder Faculty Assembly

*Administrative Services & Technology (AST) Committee 2019-20 Annual Report
May 1, 2020*

Report Completed by: Mike McDevitt, Journalism, College of Media, Communication and Information (*AST Committee Chair*)

AST Committee Members:

Faculty: Robert Buchwald, Janet Casagrand, Joseph Labrecque, Mike McDevitt, Alan Mickelson, Alex John Sweetman, Martin Walter

OIT and Administration Resources: Aisha Jackson, Larry Levine, Marin Stanek, Mark Werner

Meeting dates: 09/24/19; 10/23/19; 11/19/19; 12/10/19; 2/27/20; 4/23/20. [A meeting scheduled for 3/18/20 was cancelled due to uncertainty about the university’s initial response to COVID-19].

The AST Committee meets monthly given that a significant amount of preparation and background work must be completed by colleagues prior to each session to identify speakers, gather support materials, and facilitate efficient use of meeting time.

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Overview of Committee Work and Accomplishments

The BFA AST Committee held monthly meetings examining a variety of topics associated with technology and administrative services that most impact faculty and students. Meetings typically included guest presentations followed by discussion, input, and decision-making relative to the committee’s two primary areas of concern as summarized below.

AST Technology Topical Areas

1. Executive, Extended, and Next-Generation Education. Quentin McAndrew, Director of the Financial Futures initiative, provided an update on the workstream. Focus groups conducted in February 2020 identified short-term professional offerings (e.g., Creative Expression bootcamps), professional certificates and micro-credentials (e.g., Business of Brewing), non-professional offerings (e.g., Grandparents University), unconventional graduate programs (e.g., Urban Farming), and partnerships with employers (e.g., Online AI Lab). Implementation plans have been developed for 11 online offerings. Assuming approval by regents, the next phase will engage all university stakeholders to promote awareness and ensure representative participation.

Quentin described a remarkable upsurge of interests in the initiative in the wake of the pandemic. The committee observed that while the proposed online offerings are propelled by enterprising faculty, at some point the eclectic content could coalesce in ways that warrant more systemic attention by academic departments to assess relationships with existing curriculum.

2. Faculty and Student Technology Survey. The committee met with Kirk Ambrose, Director of the new Center for Teaching and Learning, to discuss challenges and opportunities identified in the 2018 survey of faculty and students conducted by Arts & Sciences Support of Education Through Technology (ASSETT). A consensus emerged about the need to highlight learning tools that students find most helpful yet are used infrequently by faculty. The committee recommended CTL symposia to address this discrepancy.

The ASSETT survey surfaced again during the last AST meeting of the spring semester against the backdrop of the pandemic. The survey found that students who have experience taking online courses are much more likely to report that they prefer online or hybrid classes. The course style preferences of faculty and students generally aligned in 2018, although faculty were more averse to teaching a course completely online. Presumably most faculty and students are more comfortable with remote teaching and learning due to campus-wide, COVID-19 adjustments. Mark Werner confirmed that a survey scheduling slot is available in October 2020. He will confer with colleagues in OIT, ASSETT, and other campus programs about the possibility of a faculty/student survey conducted in the fall.

3. Privacy and Web Browsers. Surveillance of web browsing and monetization of that data brings up questions about privacy. The committee will work with OIT and other stakeholders in reviewing best practices for browser use as they emerge at CU and other university systems. This inquiry should identify where preferences of the campus community align or fail to align with those of advertising, publishing, and tech industries.

4. Revision to ASTC Charge. The committee revised its charge to anticipate more frequent consultation with the Center for Teaching and Learning to identify opportunities and confront challenges that accompany instruction with new technology. While the committee includes valuable liaisons with OIT, the revised charge calls for a liaison with CTL.

AST Administrative Services Topical Areas

1. CU Boulder Response to COVID-19. The committee observed the remarkable and rapid transitions the campus implemented during the spring semester. These changes occurred without typical faculty oversight in areas such as criteria for operational changes and international travel. The committee invited Dan Jones, Associate Vice Chancellor for Integrity, Safety and Compliance, to a meeting prior to spring break, but demands on his time did not allow for a visit. As of the writing of this report, the BFA Executive Committee is meeting weekly as a pandemic response committee apart from its regular deliberations. The role of the ASTC in faculty-based, campus-wide oversight has not been worked out. Looking ahead to the new academic year, AST oversight activities could include:

- * Members of the committee acting as liaisons with CU Boulder's emergency operations team and related campus-wide planning committees.

- * Ensuring faculty oversight and input for flexible course delivery models, student cohorts, expanded use of blended in-person and remote learning, and the possibility of condensed terms. While plans are moving forward for the fall, the committee will deliberate on viable options for spring 2021, particularly as they relate to administrative services and technology with principles of diversity and equity in mind. *Inside Higher Ed* documented a range of approaches across US

higher education as of late April, 2020: <https://www.insidehighered.com/digital-learning/blogs/learning-innovation/15-fall-scenarios>.

- * Review of safety protocols for courses that incorporate face-to-face interaction.
- * Oversight of classroom resources including the ability to take temperatures and personal protective equipment for students and instructors.
- * Tracking of issues in which faculty and administrators assert divergent priorities in response to the pandemic.
- * Ensuring faculty input on a phased return to use of campus facilities that support scholarship and creative work.
- * Development of a policy to ensure student privacy during remote exam proctoring.
- * Oversight of cleaning and preventative hygiene protocols.
- * Oversight of revised policies for on-campus events involving arts and culture and athletics.
- * Monitoring of proposed alternatives to face-to-face learning in studios, seminars and laboratories.
- * A survey of students and faculty to document inequities that arise, or become more acute, in areas such as access to computers and software, supplemental funding and debt relief, and access to quiet workspaces.
- * Periodic contact with staff and faculty invested in mental health support and wellness care.
- * Input on revisions to required syllabus statements for student conduct; accommodation for disabilities; Honor Code; sexual misconduct, discrimination, harassment and/or related retaliation; and religious observances.

2. *Acquiring/Using Course Materials.* Brian Groves, Executive Director of Auxiliary Services, and Chris Gotski, Director of the CU Bookstore, met with the committee to discuss changes in course material use, delivery, and creation. Faculty, students, the Bursar, OIT, Libraries, Disability Services, and other stakeholders are increasingly impacted by lack of consistency and predictability of cost, content, and distribution. The solution, according to Auxiliary Services, is a course content strategy team to assess impact on pedagogy. The AST chair recommended that the BFA Executive Committee invite Auxiliary Services to present its analysis.

3. *Comprehensive Online Curriculum.* Robert McDonald, Sr. Vice-Provost of Online Education, discussed progress toward the Academic Futures vision of creating a continuum from traditional classroom instruction to completely online courses in a comprehensive approach that would engage all academic departments. We asked for clarity on how principles of faculty governance would play out with the university relying on an Online Program Management contract. Robert cautioned that CU possesses much of the infrastructure to expand online curriculum and consequently OPM would be limited to areas such as marketing and recruitment.

Summary

During the 2019-2020 school year, the BFA AST committee served to support faculty and students in the following topical areas: (a) review of progress in the Financial Futures initiative Executive, Extended, and Next-Generation Education, (b) consultation with CTL on learning technology tools that students find most helpful yet are used infrequently by faculty, (c) consideration of a faculty/student survey in October 2020 to reassess perceptions of online instruction, (d) monitoring web browsing options in light of concerns about privacy, (e) revision of ASTC charge to include a liaison with CTL, (f) review of CU Boulder response to COVID-19,

g) recommendation to the BFA Executive Committee to schedule a discussion on the ways in which changes in course material use, delivery, and creation are impacting teaching and learning, and (h) advocacy of protecting faculty governance in the Academic Futures-directed expansion of online curriculum.

The 2020-21 academic year will see continued work in these and related areas.