Essex County College
The October 21, 2008 ICAC
Meeting Report for ACC

Ron Bannon

November 4, 2008
0.1 In Attendance

Rita Willis, Rachel Pernia, Chengwen Wang, Gwen Slaton, Michael King, Patricia Alelov, Doris Tori, Mohamed Seddiki, Jeannette Lim, Hector Lafuente and Ron Bannon.

0.2 What Was Discussed

1. All were encouraged to re-familiarize with last year’s goals and recommendations by reading the 2007—2008 annual report.¹

2. Ms. Lim (IT) gave a full presentation of the Sakai platform (Campus EAI supported). Both student and faculty perspectives were addressed. The Sakai Learning Management System (LMS) is a free and open source course management system (similar to Blackboard), and it features a set of software based tools designed to help instructors and students collaborate online in support of their course work. Ms. Lim’s presentation highlighted many of Sakai’s features, including: grade book, drop-box for assignments, online assessments, moderated chat rooms, blogs, list serve (email updates), and external linking. A Q&A session followed, where these issues were discussed.

(a) Sakai requires student authentication (password and login) and authentication requires that students are registered for a particular course. It was mentioned that guest accounts could also be generated for those students who don’t have proper authentication credentials. This is particularly important because some students may not have a login/password during the first few weeks of a course. Authentication is particularly important because student specific (grades, etc.) information should only be available to students. Some in attendance expressed some concern that authentication may impede access. These issue will certainly need to be address, but should not limit us from using Sakai.

(b) Getting faculty involved is of central importance and it is critical that ICAC work closely with Dean White and Mohamed Seddiki to ensure Sakai is a success. It would be ideal to have at least one member from each department to become involved in using Sakai for their courses. The degree to which a faculty member becomes involved will vary, from the very basic to the more advanced. Ron Bannon will meet with Dean White before the next ICAC meeting to discuss the logistic of this faculty effort.

(c) Currently some faculty are using textbook specific online homework management systems (WebAssign, et. al.) and linking this to Sakai was of some concern. Textbooks have become increasingly driven by technology and linking the LMS to other systems concerned some in attendance.

(d) Jason Shao, although not employed by ECC, is a member of the Sakai community and has some interest in making Sakai a success at ECC. At this point in time it is not fully known what role Mr. Shao will have, but it appears that he will be able to provide some support to the ECC community.

(e) Getting Sakai up and running will be ICAC’s main priority this academic year, but we still need to address other issues. Some issues were mentioned: WiFi, online copy requests (brought up at last Chairs’ meeting), increasing use of student computer labs, Library computer labs, etc. ICAC members were encouraged to bring suggestions to the next ICAC meeting.

0.3 What Was Concluded

The entire meeting was dedicated to Sakai and getting Sakai implemented at ECC should be a major priority for ICAC. Mohamed Seddiki indicated the ECC’s IT is ready to support the implementation of Sakai, and that ICAC should work closely with Dean White to ensure that faculty get involved in using Sakai.

0.4 What Action Was Planned

Ron Bannon will meet with Dean White before the next ICAC meeting to discuss the logistic of this faculty effort.