Ferris Connect Advisory Board

April 20, 2012

Facilitator: Jackie Hughes

Attendees: Sheila Maceachron, Mike Ennis, Eunice Beck, Cheryl Cluchey, John Urbanick, John Schmidt, Sue Hastings-Bishop, Mary Holmes, Eric Quilitzsch, Andrew Peterson

**ConnectYard Demo:** ConnectYard is a social media communication platform which allows students to choose how they receive the messaging and engage in two-way dialogue with a faculty member and their classes. ConnectYard allows students to respond back from their platform of choice and it will go into Blackboard. The company says the product increases student engagement & retention (what is the data on this? Does this product truly increase retention?). You do not have to “friend” students on Facebook in order for the students to use Facebook to communicate. Any courses in Blackboard would be a “yard” in ConnectYard, but it doesn’t have to be a shell in BB to be a yard. A yard can be any group that exists actually or virtually. ConnectYard integrates with announcements and discussions. The messaging through ConnectYard is quick and you can see when a student has viewed it. This helps identify the “at risk” students who aren’t engaging enough. Each class has its own yard and it’s easy to interact with each class individually and customize it. External responses come into the yard seamlessly. There is the ability for one-to-one dialogue; messages can be marked private between instructor and student. You can also reach students via cell phone. There is a ConnectYard webinar on April 24; Jackie will send the link out. The vendor will likely be invited for an on-campus demo. The group seemed to be supportive of implementing ConnectYard. John asked if the group was taking into consideration how many faculty are using a building block before implementing it. Can the course feedback be collected and saved?

**Course Shell Templates:** Jackie shared the new shell templates with the group: Syllabus, Course Learning Outcomes, Technical Skills, and Netiquette. There is a content section with notes to the instructors, Communication section, and Resources which includes FSU support section that has lots of information. This includes learner support, instructor support, and technical support. Best practices will be hidden from students. We will create an instructional document to help faculty use this template.

**Update on Blackboard Hosting and Course request:** One problem is when you copy the semester links and information from semester to semester. Mary suggests that you use an asterisk to mark the items you want to keep from the previous shell and then delete out the ones that you don’t need. Remember that we’ll be on SP8 and Mary will send a note to go out and test SP8; this will be data as of March 1. Ordering fall 2012 course shells requests cannot be completed until July 1. It won’t be an option to request them prior to July 1.

Adjournment