

Syllabus Connect: Final Report to President's Sustainability Council

Submitted by Elaine Maldonado and Jeffrey Riman, June 23, 2015

The CET received a 2014-2015 Sustainability Council grant of \$5,000 to pilot a universal digital syllabus template. The primary goal of the pilot was to identify and test a resource that could reduce and/or eliminate the production and use of paper syllabi. Expected secondary outcomes included 1.) a universal digital template that could be used for accrediting reviews, including program mapping, 2.) a system that could integrate with Banner, Course Leaf and Blackboard, 3.) a convenient tool for new adjunct faculty and 4.) easy syllabus access for students, faculty and departments. The new system could also contribute the campus-wide digital information structure and in the long term, contribute to efforts at SUNY-wide course articulation.

On July 31, 2014, a one-year contract was signed with Intellidemia, the software provider. For the cost of the software license, FIT pilot faculty had access and full use of the software and the vendor provided technical support throughout the project. Jeffrey Riman was trained in the use of the software, served as liaison to Intellidemia and coordinated with FIT's Information Technology division. All of FIT's faculty were invited to participate in the project via email listserv, through personal outreach and with program advertisements at fall 2014 Convocation. The project was officially launched at the beginning of the fall, 2014 semester and continued through spring 2015.

SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENT

Jeffrey Riman met with all of the project faculty members individually or in groups of two. Most of the faculty attended two sessions---one for training and the second to review the final results. These meetings were essential to the pilot, providing time for formative feedback, Q&A and the opportunity to observe faculty interacting with the project.

Quantitative outcomes:

Representing six departments and three of FIT's Schools, a total of 14 faculty (12 teaching faculty and 2 non-classroom faculty) fully participated in the project. One faculty member dropped out.

A total of 20 different syllabi were created and shared with the students using Intellidemia software. These included syllabi for a wide range of courses. Sample syllabus is attached to this report. Please find examples below:

COURSE/ SECTION	Professor
ID 253, Cad I, ID 255 CAD II	Carmita Sanchez Fong
CD 232 Visual Language	Donna David
FD 131 Sewing Techniques	Eileen Karp

MA 142 Geometry and the Art of Design	Jennifer Schloming
FM 423 Fashion Planning and Allocation	Naomi Gross
PK 461 Packaging Portfolio Development	Sandra Krasovec
FM 268 Team Development Workshop	Robert Vassalotti

Two all-inclusive working lunch sessions were conducted with participating faculty on 11/5/14 and on 3/12/15.

A project survey was conducted. Key responses are listed below. Please see full results attached.

- 91% of the respondents said the syllabus was easy to build.
- 73% of the respondents recommended the product.
- 63% of the respondents felt the product met their needs.

Qualitative and Anecdotal Outcomes:

Based on faculty survey feedback, the majority of responses to the Intellidemia digital syllabus template have been good. Faculty were able to create, edit and produce complete syllabi and share them with students via links in Blackboard. Syllabi were also shared as pdf files. However, it is evident that some customization to the look of the product and certain accessibility features should be considered should the college adopt this product.

Positive survey comments:

- "This product is very intuitive to use; no surprises. It's a big plus that it interfaces with Banner, Blackboard and Course Leaf. I liked the formatting and the clean lines of the syllabus produced. "
- "We require a digital submission of all syllabi each semester now. Being able to standardize the content so that faculty mirror the essentials would be excellent, as well as appreciated by faculty."
- "This way of creating a syllabus for the many sections we run of certain classes will be great. We can create the "template" version and send to faculty to fine tune a bit. More consistency will be a good thing!"

More mixed survey comments:

- It is too restrictive. I like to update my syllabus every week, as per what is going on in the course. The major projects don't change, but discussions, homework might. Honestly, it does not look good and that does bother me."
- "Clunky and time consuming because of its functionality (or lack of) didn't save a couple of times so had to start over! Want to "design" it differently to customize the way it looks and the order of information. Easy enough to use though and some students like it and some don't."

Copies of this report are posted on the CET web site <http://www.fitnyc.edu/cet> (under Grants), and copies are being forwarded to IT and Academic Affairs.

Syllabus Connect presentations will be prepared by the CET for Sustainability Conference 2016 and/or CIT 2016 with completed project outcomes.

Due to the transition from Angel to Blackboard , no Angel group was established for this project. In its place, Google Docs were used for group communication.

Keeping in mind the SUNY-wide potential for a universal syllabus template, Doug Cohen, SUNY Associate Director of Academic Technology, was kept apprised of Syllabus Connect project developments throughout the year. A final telephone update was conducted on June 22, and he will be provided with a copy of this final report.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

During the 2014-15 academic year, Elaine Maldonado served on Assistant Dean Darrell Glenn's assessment advisory group that explored campus-wide software for assessment reporting. At each vendor presentation, a question about the potential for an interactive syllabus template was posed. Clearly, if a campus-wide assessment purchase already had the potential for a digital template, why duplicate that with Intellidemia? None of the assessment software vendors believed their product could offer a live, interactive template. In fact, CET spoke at greater length with Taskstream since the vendor had given the impression that they might be able to create this type of template within their software. Unfortunately, they could not. The major difference between Intellidemia and every vendor interviewed by the assessment group was that Intellidemia could provide a live, interactive syllabus template and the other products could not.

Also, Intellidemia, contacted the CET in spring 2015 and offered to continue the license at FIT through December 2015 , free of charge, but without support. The CET has opted to accept the offer since many of the participating faculty would like to continue with the product in the fall. Certainly, additional data will only improve our understanding and potential of this product.

SUMMARY

After piloting Intellidemia with faculty, the CET believes that the purchase of the Intellidemia interactive syllabus software would be a good decision. However, more in-depth conversations between IT, the Registrar and Intellidemia are recommended. The annual cost of a campus license is \$25,000. This would include limited customization and ongoing remote support for faculty who are building syllabi. A campus-wide deployment would occur in stages, beginning with Information Technology and the FIT Registrar in order to facilitate the integration of the product with Banner and Course Leaf. Also, due to his close-up work with the product, Jeffrey Riman would be able to provide hands-on information to further guide the institution's consideration of this worthwhile product.