ATC: Update for Faculty Senate – April 22, 2024

Who We Are

The Academic Technology Committee (ATC) is a standing committee of the Faculty Senate. Our voting members come all of the colleges at Western, and our roster of participants also includes representatives from the student body (Associated Students), Continuing Education, and the offices of ATUS and the Vice Provost for Information Technology. ATC facilitates a forum that allows facility to engage with all things technology at Western as it pertains specifically to the realms of teaching, learning, and research. More information about the role of ATC can be found at: https://facultysenate.wwu.edu/academic-technology-committee

Where We Are At

ATC is very much in a regenerative phase as the committee emerges from the pandemic era, during which the committee dealt with a number of key pedagogical, logistical, and regulatory issues related to the deployment of technologies for online learning and teaching.

Coming out of the pandemic ATC also incurred much turnover, but the committee is pleased to report that we have added seven new members this current academic year (on top of several more the year previous). Much thanks goes to Faculty Senate Chair Brandon Dupont and Faculty Senate Specialist Becky Johnson for helping to support this process, and for strengthening the connection between Faculty Senate and this committee.

Current Focus: AI

AI has been a significant focus area for the committee during the 2023/24 academic year. ATC has hosted speakers from ATUS, Instructional Design, and the Western Coalition for Integrity in recent months to better assess emergent classroom AI issues. Additionally, three ATC members attended the Faculty Senate session on this topic this past winter. The academic integrity issue in particular features much complexity in terms of the deployment of technological solutions, but ATC is hopeful that it will be able to provide some specific recommendations to the university in the coming months.

Current Focus: Student Technology Fee Participation

The other major focus for ATC members this spring is ongoing work with the Student Technology Fee, where ATC works with the STF committee and provides recommendations and input for the funding of student technology projects across campus. The STF aims to elevate the quality of the academic experience for students and better integrate technology into the classroom. Recently, ATC members have made in-person visits to a number of STF funding sites to get a faculty perspective. Most recently these included the Digital Media Center in Haggard Hall and the Engineering Makerspace.

Beyond AI and STF, other ATC areas for discussion this year have included the provision of updates for technology security for university classroom workstations; IT infrastructure developments on campus that are pertinent to teaching and learning; and developments on the Canvas teaching/learning platform. ATC realizes that faculty are especially sensitive to changes on Canvas, and ATC is always happy to take these issues up on behalf of Faculty Senators. ATC has provided a very enthusiastic voice for Canvas optimization in year previous, including the bringing back of Speedgrader to Canvas.

Qualitative Software: Atlas.ti

For over five years, ATC actively sought to make available for faculty a leading qualitative software program for conducting research. In the past, individual faculty would spend up to thousands of dollars for individual or department licenses for a range of qualitative programs. Thanks to support from the university and colleges, and the hard work of ATC members from committees past, Atlas.ti was rolled out for the Western community during the latter half of 2022, and is available for all interested faculty. It allows faculty to code and analyze transcripts and field notes, create network diagrams, and do data visualization, among other research outputs. Please visit ATUS's software page if you are interested in this program.

ATC is grateful to serve Faculty Senate and work with the academic community across campus. Please don't hesitate to reach ATC chair Derek Moscato if you have follow-up questions about the committee's work: Derek.moscato@wwu.edu