

Senate Committee on Distance Learning and e-Learning

Roger Brown, Chair

Report

October 30, 2017

PROPOSAL

1. At its October 5, 2017 meeting ([here](#)), the Senate DLeL committee agreed unanimously to recommend to Senate Council **that a pilot online system be developed to make unofficial (draft) versions of course syllabi voluntarily available to students securely (e.g., behind LinkBlue login) as part of advising and priority registration**. The motivation is that students will benefit from having this information, even in draft form, when students are choosing their courses with the help of their academic advisors.
2. Other peer institutions maintain syllabi repositories.

Open Access

- Clemson University (<https://etpr.app.clemson.edu/repository/>)
- San Diego State University (<http://sdsu-dspace.calstate.edu/handle/10211.10/1467>)

Password Protected

- University of Tennessee (<https://syllabi.utk.edu/Pages/default.aspx>)
- University of Georgia (<https://syllabus.uga.edu/>)

3. The AAUP has an article (2012) that addresses the pros and cons of posting instructors' course materials online, particularly in open, unsecured locations (see [here](#)). One problem might be "...having to defend certain courses and even whole programs from trumped-up charges made by external partisan groups". The authors, Colin Ramsey and Martha McCaughey, acknowledge however, "demands for accountability and transparency may eventually require that faculty members, particularly at public universities, post their intellectual works online for public consumption." The authors point to a Texas law (2009) "requiring the state's universities to post all course syllabi online and no more than 'three clicks away' from the universities' main home pages." The authors caution that, "When an institution posts syllabi without the express permission of faculty authors, it might well be infringing on the authors' copyrights..., [particularly] when such posting has been done without the knowledge of the faculty authors, who can't give permission for an act they don't know about, or when done against their express wishes."

The authors reiterate the AAUP's 1999 *Statement on Copyright* (see [here](#)). The statement supports faculty ownership of "traditional academic works," as both a historical practice and as a practice compatible with the general mission of higher education as a public good. It notes that "it has been the prevailing academic practice to treat the faculty member as the copyright owner of works that are created independently and at the faculty member's own initiative for traditional academic purposes. Examples include class notes and syllabi; books and articles; works of fiction and nonfiction; poems and dramatic works; musical and choreographic works; pictorial, graphic, and sculptural works; and educational software, commonly known as 'courseware.'" The courseware includes work that is published on the web and in other digital forms: "this practice has been followed for the most part, regardless of the physical medium in which these 'traditional academic works' appear; that is, whether on paper or in audiovisual or electronic form." The AAUP policy is reflected in UK's AR 7:6 (see [here](#), see top of page 3).

4. The DLeL committee wanted to be sure that their vision was technologically feasible. Brown met with Patsy Carruthers and Adam Rechtenwald in UK ITS. It looks like a very user friendly system can be set up and tested in time for the Fall 2018 student registration period.

As envisioned, anyone that was able to log into MyUK with their LinkBlue credentials would be able to access an instructor's email (one click) or an instructor's syllabus (two clicks) via the course registration portal:

Credit from this course applies to the following programs: **Undergraduate**

economics and some of the basic tools and concepts of decision making. Concepts are illustrated in terms of selected current social and economic issues including the role of agriculture in both a national and international dimension. Students who have completed **ECO 201** are not eligible to take **AEC 101** without the consent of the instructor.

[View offering history](#)

SECTION	TYPE	TIMES	LOCATION	INSTRUCTOR	OPEN SEATS	EMAIL INSTRUCTOR	VIEW SYLLABUS
Economics Of Food & Agriculture							
001	Lecture	TR 2:00 pm - 3:15 pm Aug 24-Dec 14	Agricultural Science Bldg North Rm.A0007	Alison F Davis	Check	Email	Syllabus

When an authorized user clicked on the "Email" link, the system would open user's email client and auto-populate the subject line with the course prefix and number. The system could also auto-populate the text field of the email with a message indicating where the user got the instructor's email address.

When an authorized user clicked on "Syllabus", the system would either flash a message saying:

- (1) "No unofficial syllabus is available for this course/instructor. Please contact the instructor or you might be interested in other, related syllabi", or
- (2) "An unofficial syllabus is available for this course/instructor that was last modified on _____."

In either case, before viewing any syllabus, the message would require the user to indicate "I understand" that any syllabi on the site are "unofficial syllabi and that instructors will distribute the official copy of the syllabus on the first day of the course as per Senate Rule 6.1.1."

Only after the authorized user clicked "I understand" would the system show the user a copy of the unofficial syllabus along with some metadata included at the top (e.g., course prefix, number, last modified, etc.). It may also be possible for the system to watermark these syllabi automatically with the words "unofficial" for additional clarity.

After a student registered for courses, the system may also be able to place the links to instructors' email addresses and unofficial syllabi in other useful places for students (e.g., in their online course schedules).

Instructor Access

As envisioned, instructors would update/swap/delete syllabi via the "Faculty Services" and "Class Rolls" portal of MyUK.

The screenshot shows the myUK Faculty Services interface. The user is logged in as Roger Brown. The navigation menu includes 'Faculty Services' and 'Class Rolls'. The main content area displays 'Your Classes Fall Semester 2017' with a search bar and a dropdown for 'Selected term: Fall Semester 2017'. A class entry for 'AEC 305 - FOOD & AGRICULTURAL MARKETING PRINCIPLES' is shown with 'Section 002' and 'Enrolled: 19'. Two buttons are visible: 'Update Unofficial Syllabus' and 'Update Textbook Requirements'. Red arrows point from yellow boxes labeled 'Current proposal' and 'Separate possibility' to these buttons respectively.

Importantly, the syllabi would be associated with (Instructor + Course Prefix + Course Number), but NOT associated with either (Course Section) or the (Term/Semester). That would mean that instructors would not have to upload multiple copies of the same syllabus if they were teaching multiple sections. For the same instructor and the same course, the system would populate the "Syllabus" link with the same document and preserve that association indefinitely until that instructor updates his/her syllabus for that course. Ideally, instructors would update their unofficial syllabi each semester before the priority registration period begins.

Instructors would be able to remove (delete), swap, or update their syllabi on the system at any time. This system design would allow a departmental designee to remove, swap, or update syllabi on behalf of instructors if an instructor authorized such action.

This system design would allow us to gather many kinds of user data. Basically all interactions with the course registration and enrollment systems are archived, including individual user data, times, documents downloaded, etc. In fact, it is possible to provide some of this data to instructors instantly (e.g., how many downloads of their syllabus have occurred since last updating it).

SIDE NOTE: A separate possibility would be to integrate a similar process for instructors to update/specify what the textbook requirements are for their courses.