Educational and Research Technologies Committee Annual Report, 2020 – 2021

Submitted by Helen Read, ERTC Co-Chair

ERTC Charge: The ERTC shall have the responsibility of matters related to the development and implementation of educational and research technologies at the University that guide acquisition of information literacy by students and faculty. It shall review and recommend policies and procedures relating to the planning, introduction, and use of campus-wide technologies, including computers, communications, electronic data handling, and instructional media. The committee shall assume responsibility for informing the administration of educational and research priorities and needs related to information literacy and see that these are considered in all planning. It shall maintain close liaison with the Curricular Affairs Committee, the Financial and Physical Planning Committee, the Student Affairs Committee, and the Research, Scholarship, and Graduate Education Committee. Each of these committees shall appoint one of their elected members to serve as a voting member on the Educational and Research Technologies Committee. The committee shall maintain close liaison with appropriate administrative offices in its areas of responsibility and with the Facilities and Technologies Committee of the Board of Trustees.

ERTC Members: Luben Dimov, Hung Do, Deb Ellis, Steve Kostell, Helen Read (Co-Chair), Lyman Ross, Jennifer Stratton*, Regina Toolin, Tim Tourville, Robert Wildin, Marie Wood (Co-Chair), John Yin
*Sabbatical replacement for Regina Toolin (Fall 2020)

Much of the ERTC's work over the year was to serve as a standing focus group for ETS, CTL, the CIO, and other stakeholders involved in the use of technology across campus. Major initiatives addressed by the ERTC during AY 2020 – 21 include the following.

1. ETS updates (Mike Austin). Classroom PCs now require a password; this adds security and provides better access to UVM resources. Qualtrics software (for surveys and data collection) is now available to all faculty, staff, and students. Multi-factor authentication has been in use for a while for accessing many services including the UVM VPN, UVM's Virtual Desktop Infrastructure (the platform that hosts Virtual Votey and other virtual lab environments), Peoplesoft, Qualtrics, and top-level Drupal sites. ETS is planning to expand the use of multi-factor authentication to other services in the near future, possibly including faculty/TA access of Blackboard.

2. Teams. There was a good deal of discussion surrounding the policy for the use of Teams as the supported video conferencing / collaboration tool. While some faculty would prefer Zoom over Teams, ETS has worked hard with Microsoft on improvements to Teams, and many features have been added, including breakout rooms. There is a lot of added value to an all-in-one solution that provides video conferencing, instant messaging, and file sharing in one place. ETS worked over the summer to implement automatic Team creation for all UVM courses, and Teams membership syncs automatically with Blackboard course rosters.

3. CIO Updates (Simeon Ananou). Helpline requests, CTL faculty support requests, and visits to Knowledge Base articles have all increased since the start of the pandemic. Blackboard use is way up. There have been major upgrades to classroom technology to facilitate hybrid forms of teaching. Those

upgrades will remain in place after the pandemic. The CIO also gave a presentation on Digital Citizenship.

4. Registrar Updates (Veronika Carter). The Registrar's office has been busy working on projects that have surfaced due to the pandemic, and many other projects (including the Banner upgrade) were put on hold. A new course search tool has been rolled out, which allows search by subject, College, keyword, instructor, Gen Ed requirements, teaching modalities, and service learning. The ERTC asked about search by seat availability, and (unrelated to the search tool) a means to push grades directly from Blackboard (or Excel) into the system. Those are both on the Registrar's radar and it is hoped that they will be implemented in the future.

5. Remote Learning Survey. Alex Yin presented results of the survey on Student Experience with Remote Instruction during Covid-19, which was conducted at the end of the spring 2020 semester. One of the main takeaways is the need for consistent use of learning platforms and software tools across courses.

6. Learning Management System RFP. The current Blackboard contract is nearing its end, and an RFP (Request for Proposal) is underway. The LMS Evaluation Committee has gathered feedback from numerous faculty and students, and has been working with the Associate Deans of the Colleges to schedule focus groups during the month of May. The ERTC itself served as a focus group and provided feedback regarding desires/needs in a new LMS. Faculty can find more information about the LMS RFP process at https://blog.uvm.edu/lmseval/ and are encouraged to fill out the survey linked at that site or provide feedback directly to the LMS committee co-chairs, Wendy Berenback and Alex Messinger. It is likely that the outcome of the RFP will be known in the spring of 2022. If UVM adopts an LMS other than Blackboard, the transition to the new LMS will be completed by the Fall semester of 2023.

7. Student Response System Review. A committee led by Holly Buckland-Parker and Jen Garrett-Ostermiller is evaluating student response systems, including Top Hat, Turning Point, Poll Everywhere, and iClicker. The goal is to identify a single, centrally supported platform. The ERTC provided feedback regarding usage and desirable features of such products.

8. Research Data Protection. Brian Prindle and Sam Hooker presented information on Research Data and IT Security Regulations on Safeguarding Controlled Unclassified Information. Some UVM units handle data that requires safeguards pursuant to law or contract, in addition to UVM policy. Changes to data handling will be necessary in response to recently imposed requirements for federal research funding. For the full report on this topic, contact the Faculty Senate Office.

9. Secure Management of Computers within the UVM Environment. Sam Hooker, Director of Information Security, discussed the need for tighter control of laptops and other devices that interact with the UVM network. Steps being taken in that direction may include installing software on UVM purchased computers that would help identify compromised devices.

10. Consistency in the Use of Technology Platforms. In many of the ERTC discussions during the year, the point was made that it is important for everyone across campus to use officially supported technology tools in order to provide consistency to the whole community. This came up in the discussion of Teams vs. Zoom; in the results of the Remote Learning Survey; and in a presentation by Julia Russell about the Software Review Process, which is a contract review of a technology purchase. ETS will often reach out to units if they ask to purchase software for which the University already

licenses a similar product that would do the same job. In many cases, it may not be necessary to purchase something different. We should all use the officially supported technology tools wherever possible. In rare instances, exceptions may be warranted. Those seeking an exception to use a competing product instead of one that is officially supported by UVM should reach out to the CIO directly.