

## Technology Committee Student Focus Groups (Spring 12)

### Introduction

In an effort to learn more about students' views on how technology is used at Gavilan College, a series of focus groups were conducted with a sample of students. Students were also asked to provide their suggestions on how the college might improve the use of technology. This input is an important window into the technology needs of Gavilan College students.

A total six different classes were sampled to gain a representation of the total student population. For example, one course was sampled from each of the off sites with one course at night and one during the day. One ESL course was selected along with one upper level math course. The following course composed the sample: CD/PSYC 2, CD/PSYC 3, MATH 205, ENGL 1A, ESL 562, and PHYS 4A. For classes that had more than 5 students present, a series of focus groups were conducted with each class. For example for English 1A, four focus groups were conducted with approximately 4-7 students in each group. A total of 95 students were included in the focus group discussions.

Student who volunteered to participate were provided a series of prompts for discussion: *How familiar are you with using technology at Gavilan College? What typed of technology related training or support do you and students you know need to be successful here? The college is considering using a college email system for students, what do you they should know about making this work for students? What technology hardware or software would help you be more successful at Gavilan College?* Student input was facilitated around these prompts and recorded by the facilitator.

### Findings

The focus group discussions were examined for themes and salient input. Below are the summarized comments around each prompt. The non-summarized results are listed in Appendix A.

#### **1. How familiar you are with using technology in your education here at GC?**

Nearly all students were familiar with the use of the online registration system. Students, in general, found this system easy to understand and use. Many students complained, however, about difficulties with the system crashing when registration was first open. Another student suggested that one login should get you to both Ilearn and MyGav. Many students reported using the campus Wifi system and found it useful. Other students reported that the web page was easy to use and that they easily found what they needed.

Some particular problems mentioned by students were that the online class system has problems with some browsers and that the front page had too much information. Other students commented that faculty webpages should be on the

same system not the hhh system. Additionally, several students suggested that even part-time faculty should have contact information on the online directory.

**2. What type of tech-related training or support do you and students you know need to be successful here at GC?**

Several students who took a library support class on writing a research paper found it particularly useful and suggested that it should be made available to as many students as possible. Another group of students suggested that the computer labs needed to be open more often. Several students reported that the computer and ESL lab staff may need additional training so they can assist students when they had a problem.

Several students commented that instructors had problems or issues with the classroom technology and that they might benefit from training on how to use the technology. Other students suggested that there be entry-level workshops, available online, on the basics of computer use, e.g. PowerPoint, PC, Word, etc.

A group of students commented that the WiFi service could be improved. For example, several students commented that the service would time them out when they were completing a quiz or researching a topic. And, when they logged on again they would have to try and retrace their steps. Students suggested making the system open or figuring out a way to extend the timing out feature.

**3. The college is considering using a college email system for students, what do you think they should know about making this work for students?**

Many students reported that implementation of a college email system would be a good because it would mean having a separate email for just Gavilan College correspondence. One student even noted that the student .edu email would allow her to be eligible for free shipping on Amazon.com.

Several students warned that it would be important to not receive too many emails. Another student suggested that when students register that they could use a selection tool to check what sources of information each student would like, for example, financial aid.

Other students suggested that they would not be interested in another email account. These students reported that another account would just mean another password and account to check. As such, these students suggested that it was not needed.

**4. What technology hardware or software would help you be more successful at Gavilan?**

Students had several suggestions regarding the use of technology at Gavilan College. For example, some students suggested locating a student version of Microsoft

Office™ so students could purchase these programs at a significantly reduced cost. Another student suggest that supplemental math software be available online not just in the Math lab.

In regards to hardware, another student suggested having lab top computers available in class so they can take notes and then send the notes to themselves when they had to return the computer. Some students suggested that a copier be made available for students in the library. Another student suggested getting wireless printers so students can print directly without having to copy things to a memory stick and then go on to lab computers in order to print.

Another student suggested that the college could host a site so students could store their files on that location. Another student suggested that faculty should be encouraged to choose books that have an ebook option, since this is a considerably cheaper option. Another student suggested that automatic backup also be installed in the Writing Center.

For distance education, most students who had taken an online course reported that it was well organized and easy to use. Other students reported that the hybrid classes are not as reliably organized and useful. Students suggested more faculty be trained on how to use online shells. Also, several students reported that they benefited greatly from an instructor taking a class together through the hybrid site.

For off sites, students complained that the Hollister computer lab is extremely slow and that both the computers and programs needed to be updated. Several Morgan Hill students reported that the lab space and time it was open was inadequate.

In sum, focus group participants provided important insight into how students use technology and how technology can be improved to help student be more successful. This information needs to inform technology policies, procedures, and purchases at Gavilan College.

## Appendix A: Focus Groups Responses Non-summarized

### 1. How familiar you are with using technology in your education here at GC?

- *Very familiar, everyone had used system, many students had used wifi system. Most use it with laptop, some with IPAD and phone.*
- *Most report using the online registration system, and did not find it a problem.*
- *All but one had used online registration.*
- *They all found it fine and pretty easy to use.*
- *I was frustrated during registration time because I got repeatedly bumped out. Also, when you bumped out, you don't get returned to where you were.*
- *I could not login several times. I had to reset my password and had to wait in line in person to reset it (4).*
- *All familiar with online system.*
- *Bandwidth can be a problem at reg. time.*
- *Some other browsers cause problems on the online class popup windows.*
- *Familiar with registration, easy to use.*
- *Web page, some pages need to be update more often.*
- *The front page has so many options it is overwhelming.*
- *Some things on the webpage are hard to find.*
- *The hhh faculty pages are hard to find should and be all in the same place.*
- *Most all were pretty familiar except one who was just returning to school.*
- *All found the online registration easy and convenient.*
- *The crashes around reg time are difficult (3).*
- *Registration was pretty easy. (8)*
- *It seems like it takes a while to get where you need to go (1).*
- *You should have a list of courses populated rather than a drop down.*
- *Used Banner the first time it sent me to a different place than I wanted to go, but then I figured it out. (3)*
- *It was easy (3).*

### 2. What type of tech-related training or support do you and students you know need to be successful here at GC?

- *Workshops on the basics of computers. (2)*
- *Have training for instructors on how to use the tech equipment. It can slow things down when an instructor has to mess with the equipment (2).*
- *Help students as a part of orientation with logging on and registering and demonstrating it (1).*
- *Have the wifi time out less, when you are doing a quiz and it times you out.*
- *Have wifi just wide open like evergreen, that way you can login more than one device.*
- *Make sure that the online stuff really is followed up on, for example the online request for counseling was ignored.*
- *Have entry level workshops on use of PC, Powerpoint© or Word© (6).*

- *What worked extremely well was a library class that students were walked through as a class. Courses that are hybrid sometime do not provide that much explanation and students can get lost. Make sure teachers explain things clearly ahead of time (3).*
- *Have a brief teaching style description, this will help students choose if a class matches their way of learning (3)*
- *Have lab classes open for longer times (6).*
- *Have a dummy guide for every tech area (3).*
- *Presentations provided by outreach on how to use the website at high school was very helpful.*
- *The online Library support course was very helpful and should be provided to more students.*
- *Maybe the training for the lab assistants needs to be improved. Sometimes they are not that familiar with the computers and programs (4).*
- *Maybe some computer familiarity workshops, especially for older students (4).*
- *Somehow encourage students to use technology more in their work (2).*
- *The wifi system is frustrating. You can easily lose signal (5).*
- *With timing out, reduce the timing out, you lose all of your research. If you time out, make sure you can reaccess your webpage. (6)*
- *Registration is the most frustrating, you get bumped off so quickly (10).*
- *I just wait in line instead, it is easier to get classes (1).*
- *The DE classes are well organized, some of the shell courses are not (3).*
- *Some students may have problems, May want to have more specific step-by-step examples on different functions (4)*
- *Suggested that the login should get you both Ilearn and MYgav in the same look. (3)*

**3. The college is considering using a college email system for students, what do you think they should know about making this work for students?**

- *A lot of students don't check emails you can just get it for free (3).*
- *Not sure of the point (2).*
- *I would like to have a separate mail for just gav stuff that would be good (4).*
- *I would use it (8).*
- *I would use it for sure (4).*
- *I don't think I would use it (2).*
- *Good idea, it would be nice to have everything going to one email.*
- *Yes, good idea as this will allow for Amazon prime online discount.*
- *Sounds good.*
- *Have one source of information from the college would help.*
- *Do not have too many emails though.*
- *Have a selection tool to check what sources of information each student would like, for example, financial aid.*
- *Some people already have lots of emails already so just one more to check and password to remember.*

- *That would be a good idea (12).*
  - *It would be nice to have separate accounts, they seem to get mixed up which is difficult some time (8).*
  - *Help students as a part of orientation with logging on and registering (1).*
- 4. What technology hardware or software would help you be more successful at Gavilan?**
- *Have a student version of the Microsoft Office™ suite that students could download (3)*
  - *Have more computer in MH there is very limited space (5)*
  - *Have the MH lab open for more time (5)*
  - *Have in-class borrowing of computers for taking notes, have as a part of the carts (3).*
  - *Update printers and computers at both sites (4)*
  - *Some of the new systems need to be serviced or trouble-shooted. For example, one projector has a constant glare that is very distracting.*
  - *Make sure the computer lab programs are updated (1).*
  - *Have the Math lab software available online.*
  - *Have a copier in library for students to use.*
  - *Have more labtops available for check out.*
  - *Have automatic backup at writing center*
  - *Get wireless printers, so we don't have to transfer to memory stick and then go on the computer center computers.*
  - *The Hollister lab is super slow, please upgrade connection.*
  - *Some areas like the music area to library are not covered by wireless. Improve wireless coverage.*
  - *Have better headphones in ESL lab.*
  - *We are very happy with the technology.*
  - *Update the computers in the ESL lab.*
  - *Have a more organized website (3)*
  - *Have part timers post their emails in the directory (4)*
  - *Have ipads for check out (2)*
  - *Update the computers in the lab. (6)*
  - *Have more computers in the labs, maybe even another lab (8)*
  - *The check out laptops need to be updated (6).*
  - *The mobile labs are lame (3).*
  - *Encourage faculty to chose books that have an eBook version (9).*
  - *Better printers in the labs (6).*
  - *Be able to print from your laptop/phone at the labs (3).*
  - *Have phone hosting so students can make calls on the network (2).*
  - *Have hosting for students so they can store their files and then download them when they need them. (2)*

