

LMIS meeting minutes, November 14, 2012, 8am.

Members in attendance: Denise Despres, William Morse, Martin Jackson, Pierre Ly, Ian Fox, Bryan Smith

The minutes of the October 24 meeting were approved, subject to one minor change: Brian Smyth is not listed, but he was in fact present!

The rest of the meeting was devoted to discussing the university's Intellectual Property (IP) Policy. William walked us through some history of the policy and the key issues it addresses.

Discussion of key issues in the intellectual property policy

On intellectual property, until this policy, faculty, students and staff were all covered as employees, by the law. One issue is that if we are all covered as "employees", the university may automatically own the work. Although it was implicitly assumed that faculty, students and staff were not the same when it comes to producing research or other documents, the university did not have any policy to clarify the rights of each of these groups relative to each other and the university as a whole. To address such issues, a small group (including William) was formed to brainstorm about a new IP policy.

William gave an example from occupational therapy. There, faculty and students often jointly produce training materials that may have value to people in this field outside the university. The respective rights of faculty, students and the university on such work were not clearly defined by existing policies.

For example, the new policy sets a high minimum value (around one million dollar or so) above which the university would be entitled to collecting a share of royalties based on work produced by faculty and students. Denise asked why this was needed, and William responded that collecting royalties would only make sense for the university for very high value added, lucrative projects, but not for smaller projects such as textbooks or training materials.

The new policy clarifies these issues, anticipating potential future disputes that may occur. It is important not just because we need it for accreditation or other legal concerns, but also, as William pointed out, for recruitment purposes.

Denise pointed out that in addition to work in occupational therapy, there is some serious scientific research on campus, in cutting edge fields such as neuroscience. Students often co-produce this research with faculty through summer research grants and research assistantships.

William said that although faculty and students, other than in a few exceptions, remain the owners of their work, the university automatically owns the work of staff. Then, Bryan raised the issue of a potential grey area: is a student doing summer research staff for the university, or is he/she conducting his/her own academic work? Does the policy differentiate between student research undertaken as research assistants and that by summer research grants? These are important issues, especially if some of the work produced jointly by faculty and students ever turned out to be very valuable. William emphasized that it is better to have clear agreements defining students' rights clearly, prior to starting the work.

How do we spread the word about the IP policy?

Everybody agreed these are very important issues and people on campus need to know about the new policy that defines their rights. The key issue, then, is how to advertise it effectively to faculty, students and staff in all departments and offices. Martin noted that for now, it was extremely difficult to find it, even if you actively look for it on the website. The IP policy should be prominently displayed in relevant places. This is also important for accreditation requirements.

Denise asked whether the policy should be introduced in new faculty orientation. Martin said it could be mentioned briefly, but that policies are not what orientation is about.

Martin opened the faculty and staff policies webpage, and the committee brainstormed on where to place links to the IP policy. Denise suggested it would be useful as part of faculty professional development resources, as well as in the summer research awards section. For the latter, one way would be to have a link to “Important information for research sponsors”, that would include the IP policy.

Denise noted that given the very large flow of information coming to faculty, students and staff every week, many people simply cannot pay attention to issues that are not immediately relevant to them. This needs to be taken into account as we dispatch more information about the IP policy.

Many forms of communications will have to be used concurrently in order to get attention. There will be an email through facultycoms with links to the library copyrights policy page. Moreover, since course textbooks are often ordered online, Denise suggested there could be a link to IP and copyright issues on the order form. Pierre suggested that a link and a note on Moodle may be useful, since many people actually use Moodle several times a week.

Is the new policy consistent with older policy documents one can find on the website?

Lastly, Martin raised the concern that some details in the new IP policy could clash with previous policy documents on similar issues. William said that there would need to be a closer look, but at first glance, it doesn't look like there are any conflicts. However, it would be best to streamline the policy documents and make sure there are no duplicates with slightly different ways of presenting the policies.

Plans for spring 2013

Finally, the committee made plans to meet again in January after classes have started. Some important issues will be on the agenda: FERPA, special collections and archives, and the role of the library in helping with first year seminars.

Martin suggested the committee could also start examining the possibility of moving toward the online administration of course evaluation surveys. This could be more efficient, but also raises practical issues. Of course, this would eventually be brought up to the professional standards committee.

William added the importance of discussing the upcoming new enterprise system that will replace Cascade: Optimize Puget Sound, which will be deployed in March. It may be useful to have some previews for feedback before going live. William noted that such change is inevitably disruptive, but that the system is flexible enough that within a couple of years, departments and offices will find useful ways to adapt it to their specific needs.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:52am.

Respectfully submitted,

Pierre Ly