MEMORANDUM

TO: The Michigan State University Steering Committee

FROM: Emily Bank, ASMSU Vice President for Academic Affairs

RE: Online Syllabi Database for Students

The attached proposal of a course syllabus database resource for students at Michigan State University is a service that could be made available for students by the fall semester of 2013.

Background

Syllabi databases are an emerging trend at top universities across the United States. The MSU syllabus database could be a central, online repository for syllabi at Michigan State University. The goal is to allow students and advisors to browse syllabi from courses offered at Michigan State University to help select classes that are best for that individual student.

In addition, the MSU Code of Teaching Responsibility requires instructors to include the following in their syllabi:

- Course content and instructional objectives, which must be consistent with the university-approved course description found in the MSU Descriptions of Courses catalog.
- Instructor contact information and office hours, with a provision for arranged office hours to accommodate students whose schedules conflict with the regularly-scheduled office hours. Office hours must comply with the minimum number of hours approved by each unit.
- Grading criteria and method used to determine final course grade.
- Course content and instructional objectives, which must be consistent with the university-approved course description found in the MSU Descriptions of Courses catalog.
- Instructor contact information and office hours, with a provision for arranged office hours to accommodate students whose schedules conflict with the regularly-scheduled office hours must comply with the minimum number of hours approved by each unit.
- Grading criteria and method used to determine final course grade.
Proposed Approach

ASMSU respectfully requests a database be created in conjunction with the MSU course description website (http://www.reg.msu.edu/Courses/Search.asp) to allow students to more thoroughly evaluate courses that would best fit their academic plan.

We recognize that many instructors see their course syllabi as their intellectual property, and therefore are protected by their intellectual property rights. To further protect these individuals, instructors should have the ability to voluntarily post their course syllabus online. In addition, an abbreviated version of the syllabus could be sufficient including required/recommended text books, course objectives, office hours, contact information, and a tentative schedule of assignments.

Instructors are required by federal law to post required readings for students. For this reason, an abbreviated version of a syllabus should be ready to post prior to an enrollment period.

To choose a syllabus, select a term, subject code and course number on the course descriptions website. If a syllabi or tentative syllabi draft has been posted, the student or advisor can click on the link to view it. If no syllabus has been posted, “Syllabus To Be Determined” will replace the syllabus location.

Any student, advisor, or member of the MSU faculty/staff community will have access to view a posted course syllabus. Instructors will have the option to make their syllabus public or private to the Michigan State University community.

Recommendation

Establish and implement a syllabus database for courses at Michigan State University. Instructors will have the ability to alter and refine their posted syllabi as needed.

Sincerely,

Emily Bank
The Associated Students of Michigan State University
Vice President for Academic Affairs