CSM 570: Whitepaper Project No. 1 – eReaders in Higher Education

As you know, this course is focused on coordination and delivery of computer-mediated learning, meaning in higher education, corporate settings, non-profits and other environments. The idea is to prepare you to provide leadership to any organization moving toward employing 'doing work' vs 'going to work' as a mantra. Part of the content in this class and the entire program has to do with tools, obviously, but hopefully you are learning that it also has to do with the context of the "use" of those tools. The entire environment has to be taken into consideration as well as the tool and even the outcome desired. For this project, we are going to undertake a real-life example of how the context has to be examined before a tool and/or strategy is embraced or suggested.

Either for your own organization or as a consultant asked to help an organization 'think through' a particular technology-related task, you will probably be asked to prepare a whitepaper. This is a valued and important aspect to technology consulting as well as actually working for an organization. Therefore, this real-life case study will be valuable to you in terms of your own skills and experience as well as to the 'client' for the project.

Task: Develop a whitepaper[1] to help guide the decisions to be made about using eReaders in one or more programs/majors within The College of Human Environmental Sciences (CHES) at The University of Alabama.

Background: There is a recently passed law in Alabama that provides important and significant guidelines to institutions of education about the use of textbooks; it is specifically aimed at ensuring that faculty members give great consideration to the issues associated with selection of textbooks, namely cost and application. As a result of this law, greater emphasis is being placed on textbook selection.

Also as a result, some conversations have been held about the possibility of using eReaders, including at meetings of deans around the country. These meetings, to date, have been broad in their participation, with deans from all types of colleges participating (A&S, Engineering, Communications, CHES, etc). Now, these conversations have begun to take place within the faculty communities other than those associated with technology, including within CHES here at BAMA.

Historically CHES was identified as a 'smart college' because of its use of technology during this new century, beginning with the creation of IIT in 2001, its early and rapid adoption of eLearning/online teaching, its creation of a broader network including technology in outreach to its

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[1] **Definitions -** <u>White paper</u>: A whitepaper, as defined here, is not the same as a position paper in that the purpose is to identify all issues related to a task and undertake research related to those issues. Once the research has been completed, findings are summarized within each area and, perhaps, a list of considerations prepared. A whitepaper helps an organization or its leaders to quickly grasp the issues in terms of what salient facts are available to guide their choices.
<u>Position paper</u>: A position paper is just that: a position paper. It goes the next step and makes a solid, definition recommendation.

distributed partners, early installation of wireless, and even recently with its ground-breaking use of QR tags at Homecoming.

Now, CHES wants to explore the use of eReaders, continuing that tradition of early adoption, but, as is true with any organization, the leadership wants to make that move if it makes sense for its students and represents a wise decision in applying technology.

Students in CHES, like those in other parts of the university, are concerned with money, but they are also concerned that they have the best educational opportunities possible, so the decision is not one that be made simply based on money. Faculty members have to know that what they can use with students is the best possible option, regardless of format. There are other factors involved in the decision, which, combined with those already named here, comprise the rationale for this white paper.

Process: This will be a collaborative as well as cooperative process[2]. There will be collaborative writing internally within the team; do not assign specific writing parts. You can assign specific reading but then discuss that and come to consensus as to what to report. Even if the lead reader on an issue takes the lead in writing, everyone can read, edit and contribute to that section. Make this a true collaboration.

This is **NOT** a competition, so we are **NOT** pitting teams against other teams. We are merely asking five different consulting groups to examine the task! As may happen in the real world (well, hopefully), you can use peer-reviewers from other teams. The teams can even meet together, if they wish, to talk about the task. This is strictly up to each team as to whether or not they do this and to what degree.

If you use the peer-review approach with members outside of your own team, ask them to use the COMMENT feature and not edit directly on the document. This is more typical of that kind of review.

Here are the general components of the process:

- Divide yourselves into five (5) working teams.
- Set up your own team workspace on a new wiki – your call as to what 'brand' of wiki you use (i.e. WikiSpaces, WetPaint, PBworks, PrimaryPad, etc.). Give membership to your team and to Dr. Price and me. Work out the mechanics of that within your group.
- Set up an external calendar, such as Google Calendar for your team's use in the work.

Begin by asking questions such as these:
- What are the tools involved here, possibly? What is known about their use? Specifically in higher education?
- What are other universities, colleges, colleges of human environmental sciences and even departments and majors doing around the country?
- What are the associated issues in making such as decision?

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[2] Remember the difference between 'collective writing' (like making a quilt and everyone makes his/her own square, all cobbled together as a quilt) and "collaborative writing", meaning it emerges there on the wiki as a result of each person's reading and writing all on the same items?

- And what is known from research and publications about those issues?
- Are demographics a factor?

Determine the framework for your report (whitepaper). Here are the key components typically expected in a whitepaper, but you can name them differently if you think it best suits the audience and subject matter.

- Succinctly put, what is the issue (charge?)?
- Approach (or Process) – Succinctly put, what did you do?
    o A framework is helpful here, too.
- Results – Organize your results very tightly; you will be writing for busy administrators in this whitepaper and in all whitepapers. They need succinct, to the point, information that is clear and accurate. However, you need to <u>support it with research and data</u> – but you can put in appendices so that if someone in the leadership team wants to see more, it's there.
    o And the more you can provide a framework for this, the better.
- Conclusions or Summary – and make this a real executive summary here because they sometimes just read this or read it first.
- Bibliography – this is where you put in APA style everything you read, and, if you interviewed someone or had a SKYPE – use the APA on all the options (i.e. mp3, video, etc) for electronic media. For example, you can interview someone from the American Library Association and use that in your references.
- It should be no more than 15 pages, excluding the bibliography, index and cover page (no abstract). Use Times Roman 12pt font and 1 inch margins.

Outcomes: We will end up with 5 teams' whitepapers, which will be read, graded and provided with feedback. The reviewers joining me will be Dr. Price and two or more faculty in CHES, as well as Dean Boschung, and one or more staffers from UA's BookStore. These may also be shared with the University's Provost, Dr. Judy Bonner.

COMMENT: This is an example of a consulting activity that may be available to you once you get the word out there that you are not 'selling' anything in the way of hardware or software. Our faculty members provide this kind of service to all kinds of organizations, either as just that, a service, or as a paying consulting activity. For example, a company may be considering whether or not to switch mobile devices; a team of consultants might be asked to review the situation and 'make a recommendation'. The consultants typically will counter with the offer of a whitepaper, meaning they provide all sides of the issue and then give that information to the leadership members of the organization to decide. If, in the end, the consultants are asked to 'make a recommendation', they may do so in a position paper but the whitepaper is the research that would be needed anyway to make that decision. By doing a whitepaper, it allows the consultants to examine the context for the task and look at all options, free of any expectations related to a vendor or personal preference.

If you anticipate private consulting, this is a valuable experience because the content for the whitepaper can be as varied as the fields in which you work. If you anticipate being in higher education, this is the kind of committee work needed prior to any curriculum change or new activity, not to mention grant proposal development of online ideas and activities. If you are a company (i.e. real estate, accounting, health services) or an agency, this is the kind of review and research you would undertake prior to a policy change. See the relevance?

Point Value: 100 pts - Team Grade (each member of the team will receive the same grade. It is your responsibility to participate and to get your teammates to do so).

Review the whitepaper project rubric on the next page:

RUBRIC for Whitepaper Project - eReaders in Higher Education: 100 pts

Variable	0-1 pts Poor	2-4 pts Adequate	5 pts Outstanding	Comment
Form/Format: Clerical Details Products failing to achieve a professional look and read will not be submitted for grading.	Product contained inappropriate font, poor spacing, unprofessional look –	Product looks professionally prepared in that font, spacing, cover sheet, etc. convey positive impression toward the product	Product is outstanding in its look, presentation	
Mechanics Spelling, Grammar, Sentence Structure Products failing to achieve a professional look and read will not be submitted for grading.	Product contained inaccurate spelling, poorly constructed composition	Product was well presented in terms of proper grammar, sentence structure and spelling. There may be one or more editorial changes needed and/or minor edits.	Composition was clearly written with proper grammar, spelling and sentence structure; it also reflected advanced graduate-level writing skills (sophistication).	
Variable	0-4 pts Poor	5-10 pts Adequate	11-15 pts Outstanding	Comment
Technical – Links to external sources Note: If you record an interview or other original media, this must be uploaded to your BAMA and properly linked in the document	Product contains links in the narrative and/or bibliography that do not work, thus making additional investigation impossible.	Product's links in the narrative and/or bibliography all or almost all are properly linked for access.	Product includes links in the narrative and/or bibliography and they all work properly	
Elements of Whitepaper It is not necessary that the components carry the precise names shown in the instructions but these sections must be reflected.	Product did not reflect all components or were unclear as to where they were and their relationship to the task was unclear.	Product reflected the expected/required components as suggested, and their relationship to the overall paper was clear. However, some edits might be required to fully benefit from a framework.	Product reflected all required components and their relationship to the paper was evident, making for easier reading and comprehension as an executive document.	
Organization of whitepaper	Product was poorly organized, making reading difficult, including that it did not follow its table of contents; navigation through the report was difficult.	Product was properly organized so that reading was facilitated, with easy understanding of how the components were related. Some editing would enhance the final product.	Product was very well prepared with the sequence of information presented in a logical, easily-followed format. Each component contributed to the other for an overall tightly written professional product.	
Content: Accuracy	Product's bibliography was inaccurate in terms of matching the narrative and/or actual citations; product did not reflect proper use of	Product's narrative and bibliography matched, using APA style, and were accurate citations. Some additional information might be needed to verify particular aspects in the	Product's use of sources was completely accurate, including narrative and bibliography, reflecting use of APA citation style. All information was	

	APA including citation of electronic sources.	final product and/or some edits in terms of additions or deletions might enhance but would not be related to accuracy.	accurate and properly cited/credited for all types of sources.	
Content: Depth	The product did not reflect comprehensive recognition of all of the collateral issues that might surround this decision within CHES or some inaccurate assumptions were included that limited the research used.	The product reflected extensive consideration of the issues with an array of issues investigated (i.e. costs, demographics, etc). The coverage was adequate, though additional reading and consideration might have produced one or more other issues for inclusion in the product.	The product reflected extensive consideration of the issues resulting in what reviewers consider a comprehensive, exhaustive discussion of all related issues. The coverage was in depth on each issue in that research was reflected to show current information.	
Content: Relevance	The product was well prepared and presented but missed the key target audience of readers or failed to reach synthesis of the material in such a way as to be truly useful.	The product was well prepared and presented and gave the target audience of readers succinct and pithy information, acknowledging the need for an executive summary approach. Some additions may be necessary to complete the product, but overall, it is on target for the task and relevant to the users.	The product was on target, giving accurate, complete information from all perspectives, appropriate for the target audience of readers.	