

## Summary of Interviews

### **14 April 2015: Robert Beasey**

Notes from Sharon Austin:

Paraphrasing: When asked for one thing that could be changed regarding the online learning experience for him at USFSP, Robert replied the “not so personal interface”. We went on to confirm that this specifically meant, student-to-student interaction, student-to-faculty interaction, student-to-staff interaction, interactions in general. Robert highly favored a “video chat” type of interaction.

A brief side discussion immediately ensued, in that a video chat scenario with “scheduled” video chat times could dovetail well with the current manner in which students are given guidance in a face-to-face manner. A staff member, in her office, equipped with a camera, would have access to all of the resources available to her normally, but by using the face-to-face interaction of a video chat, would enable the student to have real-time interaction with a staff member while providing convenience and relief from the necessity to find transportation to a staff member’s office. This last feature figures prominently for those with disabilities, who are reliant upon specialized van services to meet these appointments.

We may also want to explore Firefox “hello”, a browser extension that may allow video chat. This would be an inexpensive way and very convenient to add video chat capability to extant computers already in staff offices. Put another way, the infrastructure already exists on campus for the technology.

Further, virtual office hours for video chat conferencing could be enabled for all students very easily through the portal interface, thus reinforcing the capability of a robust web presence that would allow USFSP students to all aspects of their academic careers without needing to come to campus, as outlined in the original tasking of the portal.

As we explored ways to make the interface easy to use for those with disabilities, Robert brought up the subject of an audio “supplement” to speak text for those with weak vision. This specifically was NOT a reference to voice recognition software, simply a way to “speak” an option when selected. (text-to-speech). Dr. Frechette expanded on the idea, asking if providing access to the information by phone would be helpful. This immediately felt like a great solution to many problems; it would allow mobile access, low-bandwidth, and almost built-in accessibility features for many students with mobility and/or speech challenges. Significantly, it could also be tied into a portal interface to allow notifications of deadlines or important events to the student, or tied into a synchronized calendar. He had heard of a company called “Twilio” that could perhaps offer relevant technology; we’ll look into it a bit more to see what it’s about.

Robert mentioned that he used shortcuts considerably to help him navigate through an interface; further prompting found that he tended to use Internet Explorer quite a bit, mainly because that is the OS commonly found in public institutions, so we want to explore a little more whether the shortcuts he is familiar with are specific to IE, or are more general. It did not appear that he was particularly familiar with any shortcuts in Canvas, nor are we. This is also something we need to explore further. If there are shortcuts available to students, how are they made known to the students?

Finally, Robert made specific recommendation/request to incorporate a video featuring a student with actual disabilities as a “visual” ADA statement that is incorporated into courses and learning management systems.