Providing Training and Support for Online Instructors to Improve the Student Experience

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Project Overview and Expected Benefit

When an instructor steps into a physical classroom, he or she is stepping into a time-tested model with well-defined operating parameters. Although we assume faculty know something of the face-to-face learning setting, we cannot assume that knowledge translates to the online classroom. The course instructor is left on their own to figure out what constitutes a successful learning experience.

Teaching in an online environment requires specific sets of skills. Palloff and Pratt (2001) assert that online teaching necessitates moving beyond traditional pedagogy to adopt new, more-facilitative practices (p. 20). Furthermore, they believe that “faculty cannot be expected to know intuitively how to design and deliver an effective online course” (p. 23) because, even though courses in technology are becoming more available to students, “seasoned faculty have not been exposed to techniques and methods needed to make online work successful” (p. 23).

Levy (2003) concurs with Palloff and Pratt, asserting that although the principles of designing online and traditional classroom courses are similar, “instructors need training and support to be willing to adopt this new teaching paradigm [and] need to be cognizant of how the details of their course will be implemented in the new environment” (para. 12). Weigel (2000) maintains that we need to move beyond simply trying to use the Internet to deliver standard classroom models and instead focus on developing ways to use the Internet to develop a “richness” that enhances education.

Helping faculty learn to survive and even thrive online is critical if we are to realize the potential of the online classroom. Therefore we propose the creation of a series of three faculty workshops to teach strategies and share good practices on

1) creating an online course,
2) supporting a learning community and
3) assessing students.

The series of three faculty workshops will be held in the Fall Term 2011 and the Spring Term 2012. Workshops will be limited to 30 people each and include refreshments and a copy of Dr. Correia’s manual "Teaching Online - A Quick Reference for Online Instructors”.

The graduate student sponsored by this grant will be housed in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction and managed by Dr. Correia. The graduate student will be on a 12-month appointment to assist in developing and leading the workshops. After the conclusion of the workshops, the graduate student will help maintain a support website for online instructors with tip sheets and tutorials, and create a learning community for online instructors that will be maintained via a variety of social media and moderated discussions. The hope is the initial cohort of workshopped faculty will strive to assist not only one another but any faculty seeking guidance for teaching online, and this learning community will continue to grow and thrive.
**Support and Maintenance**

The graduate student's workstation and any needed software will be provided by the Department of Curriculum and Instruction. Hosting of website(s) and their ongoing technical support and maintenance will be provided by the Brenton Center for Agricultural Instruction and Technology Transfer. Any future workshops following the granting period will also be the responsibility of the Brenton Center for Agricultural Instruction and Technology Transfer.

**Budget**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Units</th>
<th>Unit Cost</th>
<th>Total Cost, Funding Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CAC Central Pool</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personnel: 20-hour graduate assistant (salary + benefits for 1 year) to help</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>$19,596</td>
<td>CAC Central Pool</td>
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<tr>
<td>develop and lead the workshops, and manage post-workshop activities.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Other</td>
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<tr>
<td>Faculty Workshop Manuals</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>$2,700</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refreshments: Pastries, coffee and juice for all 6 workshops</td>
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<td>$500</td>
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<tr>
<td>Staff member to co-develop and lead workshops with graduate student.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Provided by the Brenton Center</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ongoing workshops and technical support for the project.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Provided by the Brenton Center</td>
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<td>Management of graduate student.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Provided by Dr. Ana-Paula Correia</td>
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<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td></td>
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<td>$22,796</td>
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References:

