

College of Liberal Arts – College of Fine Arts Summer Instructional Technology Workshop - \$24,000

Introduction:

Over the last few years, many new technologies have been installed in colleges around the campus intended to support the research and instructional mission of the University. Computers on nearly every desktop – connected to the world with fast and secure networks, computers and multimedia presentation technology in nearly every classroom, pervasive wireless network coverage, and server-based instructional tools like Blackboard are now widely used by our faculty. Still, interviews with both faculty and students suggest that all this technology is used to only a fraction of its capability. In a sense, systems, facilities and practices have developed with such breathtaking speed, that many faculty have only minimally assimilated the new tools into their everyday instruction. This proposal aims to improve that situation.

In effect, the successful idea from the College of Liberal Arts, the “Summer Instructional Technology Workshop”, will be “franchised” and provide a select number of faculty in each of the sponsoring colleges with a survey of the various tools available on campus or inexpensively on the Internet, and intensive instruction on specific techniques for delivering instructional content with techniques like podcasting, blogging, lecture capture, RSS feeds, and the construction of simple web sites. Specific tools will be demonstrated that leverage existing campus infrastructure and make these techniques as simple to use as possible. We wish to provide faculty with practical approaches to online instruction.

Like the Liberal Arts program this is patterned after, participants will be selected to maximize the impact of the workshop, and the training will be designed to give faculty the skills needed to create pedagogically sound multimedia course materials. Workshop sessions will be designed to increase the impact of our prior investments in technology by "connecting the dots" between existing campus infrastructure and emerging "Web 2.0" techniques and tools. As much as possible, simple and inexpensive tools and approaches will be employed to leverage the substantial technology infrastructure already available on campus.

“Franchising” the idea meets the challenge of scaling the program up while retaining a practical class size. The instructional series will be offered more than once during the summer, with dates and locations selected to meet the needs of specific colleges and schools while providing the additional benefit of local customization. A “core” set of seminars will be common to all the seminar series (perhaps 2/3 thirds of the sessions) while other sessions will be changed to suit local initiatives and instructional or research needs. Presenters of the “core” material will be asked to make their presentations for each series instance, while local, more specialized courses will be designed and provided by the sponsoring college or school.

Media Production:

While good media production tools exist on both platforms, the Apple Macintosh provides the best example of how these tools can be integrated. Central to the Mac, media (“objects”) in the form of digital photos, music, and movies provide the basis for an integrated media production platform. In an increasing number of applications, these media "objects" are available from within each tool – allowing users to leverage their work capturing images, sound and moving video and repurpose them in a variety of production environments. All Macs are now equipped with the so-called "iApps" (iLife: iPhoto, iTunes, iMovie, iDVD, iWeb), allowing even the most casual users access to sophisticated tools for the production of finished media like audio CDs, video DVDs, image libraries and Web Sites. When combined with campus provided applications like the Digital Archive Service (DASe), Webspaces and Blackboard, really sophisticated instructional materials are within the reach of many faculty.

Presentation:

Summer Instructional Technology Academy (con't)

With the addition of the "iWork" suite (Keynote, Pages) from Apple, or by using the Microsoft applications Powerpoint and Word, many faculty can produce sophisticated presentations for use in the campus Technology Classrooms, and then make those presentations available to students afterwards for study and review. This relatively simple example of campus infrastructure and desktop technology use is mentioned by many students as the current "killer app" in instruction.

Classroom Capture:

With the addition of inexpensive applications like "iShowU" (Mac) or "Camtasia" (PC), it becomes possible for a faculty member to record everything she does during her presentation, including her commentary, into a downloadable file that can be viewed by students as many times as needed. This technique of classroom presentation capture has been used with great success at the University of Houston. Their service, known as "VNet", combines simple, "off the shelf" applications with a campus server infrastructure to provide students and faculty with a suite of tools that enhance the instructional process. "VClass" (part of VNet) provides, among other things, a method for streaming classes to the Web:

. . . For professors, VClass provides all the tools needed to stream lectures, but without the need for extensive technical support-personnel or expensive equipment usually required by traditional streaming tools. The professor records his/her visual and voice notes and publishes them to the Internet in a matter of minutes. It makes daily streaming lectures possible since it does not require the complicated file post processing of most conventional systems. File upload to the server is a very simple step that can run in any web browser's window. The files are automatically processed for streaming and published in the server.

(from the VNet site found at <https://vnet.uh.edu/About.lasso>)

While the specific tools mentioned in the excerpt do not exist on the UT campus, others – like the DASE, Webspaces and Blackboard – do. All represent reasonable ways to post content for student download and will be demonstrated in the workshop.

Faculty Requirements:

As an example however, the current Liberal Arts program asks faculty to attend a minimum of ten, three-hour sessions selected from twenty sessions delivered over two weeks, and have recently emphasized grant seeking in order to encourage faculty to aggressively pursue outside funding for their technology and teaching projects. Other colleges and schools may set other requirements in order to meet local initiatives or needs.

College Contributions:

As an example, Liberal Arts and Fine Arts have provided faculty with a \$1500 stipend for participation in the program. Other colleges and schools may have other preferred methods of encouraging participation. Each sponsoring or school will also be expected to provide appropriate teaching and lab facilities for their instance of the program, along with any other resources needed to design and deliver locally-flavored instruction.

ITAC Contribution:

We request funding in the amount of \$24,000 from the Information Technology Advisory Committee. This is intended to cover the cost of a project coordinator who will be responsible for scheduling facilities and presenters, registering faculty, and coordinating technology and support aspects of the program.