Faculty Training in Web-Based Course Tools
A Multi-Institutional Model Training Partnership

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The relentless march of computer-based technologies into the university environment poses some difficult questions for educators with regard to the distribution of resources and personnel. A particularly important aspect of the problem involves the training of faculty in the techniques and appropriate uses of so-called coursebuilding tools. In many cases, universities find themselves in the position of having to deploy technology-based course materials with far too little time to train and build an organization to support the builders of those materials. A number of consequences can and do arise under such pressure, including deployment of materials not meeting the institutional standards, inefficient duplications of effort on the parts of those faculty building the material, crisis-mode operation of local TLT structures, and diversion of IT resources needed elsewhere. Seemingly, there would be obvious advantages, were universities within the UNC system to enter into training partnerships to fully leverage the expertise and experience of their respective TLT organizations. Such agreements would involve the partner institutions developing and delivering quality training programs, for use internally and for delivery to others in the partnership. In the areas targeted by such partnerships, no single institution would need to build from scratch training and support in every area – others in the partnership, specializing in other high-priority areas, could provide the training in those areas either to the end-user or to the TLT personnel. Distributing the development of expertise among all partnering TLT groups would accrue several benefits to the partnership – efficient use to the expertise and resources available; more rapid response to pressing, since each partner would need to "specialize" in fewer areas; and development of a collegial, intercampus support network.

The TLT groups at Appalachian State University, Western Carolina University and the University of North Carolina at Asheville propose a project to pilot a collaborative training effort as described above. All three universities have all chosen to provide the WebCT (World Wide Web Course Tools ® from Universal Learning Technology) package to their faculty for use in delivering both course enhancements and distance education courses. Appalachian has been using WebCT for some time and has developed a training program for its faculty, which has resulted in the training of 187 faculty and the deployment of some 200 active courses in the time since June of 1999. Western and UNCA intend to deploy the WebCT package in the near future and will need to rapidly develop faculty support structures as the deployments take place.

We propose to begin building a training partnership, with Appalachian sharing its expertise and training experience with 3 or 4 TLT personnel and with some 20 faculty from Western and UNCA. Appalachian will allow the use of its training facilities, server, WebCT license and TLT personnel for these workshops, with each participating institution covering the cost of lodging for its participants. The expected outcomes for this project are as follows:

WCU
3-6 trainers experienced in teaching faculty WebCT
14 faculty trained in the use of WebCT

UNCA
2-3 Trainers experienced in teaching faculty WebCT
6 faculty trained in the use of WebCT
ASU
Improvements in its WebCT training rubric
Development of closer ties with its sister institutions
Rapid and intensive orientation of 2 new personnel in Instructional Computing Services

The partnership asks that the TLT Collaborative purchase 20 laptop computers for use in these sessions, with the understanding that the computers will be jointly owned and available for similar (or expanded) workshops in the future at any of the partnering institutions. The initial offering will be a three day series of workshops in late May for TLT personnel from Western and UNCA, in which those personnel will be intensively familiarized with WebCT, with the intent that the same personnel will act as assistant trainers in a subsequent session for faculty from their institutions, to be offered in middle to late June.

This project, if funded, can serve as a "demonstration of concept" for the idea of collaborative training (and "train the trainer") partnerships. Although full funding would be greatly appreciated, the partners in this venture will attempt to secure partial matching funding from their institutions for these machines if necessary.

Proposed budget
20 laptop computers @ $2100 $44,000