

Education / Career Decision-making, and Study Skills Training Online for the Appalachian Learning Alliance: A Collaborative Project between Appalachian State University's APPLE project, the Public Broadcasting System's Project ACCESS, and 9 community colleges in western North Carolina.

THE PROBLEM: Less than 5% of entering community college students persist through a BA degree. (1) (All references may be found at www.fd.appstate.edu/apples/references.htm). Distant Education course completion rates are 10 to 15% less than on-campus courses (2). Thus, Distance Education persistence through the BA probably is even lower than the overall 5% rate. To maximize success in college and careers, students need careful, continuous planning, and a broad array of learning skills. The projected large increase in college students exceeds the capacity for on-campus instruction in these areas(3). An effective, online system of planning and skill-building is needed both for on-campus and distant learners.

A SOLUTION: The purpose of the partnership of the Public Broadcasting System's Project Access and Appalachian State University's APPLE Project is to create a national online system to assist distant learners in achieving their educational and career goals.

Project ACCESS is a suite of web sites designed to help students assess their interests, skills and experience, to make wise educational and career plans, and to find appropriate distance / on campus courses or jobs. (For details of Project ACCESS, see www.pbs.org/als/access .)

The APPLE Project consists of training and information modules in the areas of study and life skills, and first aid in physical and mental health(4). They are designed to be an effective online version of Freshman Seminar, a national program that has significantly increased retention, grade point averages, credit hours earned per semester, and graduation rates(5). ASU's APPLE project will be an integral part of PBS Project ACCESS to increase students' educational success.

STATUS OF THE PROJECTS AND PARTNERSHIP: The PBS Project Access, including demonstration APPLES, will be beta tested on 5,000+ students between 9/1/00 and 8/30/01. *IF* 25 APPLES are ready by 8/30/00 for inclusion in the beta testing free, PBS will make the entire suite of ACCESS sites available FREE to all students in ASU's Appalachian Learning Alliance's (ALA) nine community colleges, AND any other community college in North Carolina that chooses to participate in the beta testing. After the beta testing, Project ACCESS will be distributed with their 225 TeleWeb Courses. Last year, 4,000+ students in the ALA took PBS TeleWeb courses (6).

We have conducted five studies to determine high priority APPLE topics, desirable APPLE characteristics, and what is currently available on the internet (7). Forty-six APPLES are in an alpha state. Eight APPLES are in a *first draft* beta state. (see <http://www.fd.appstate.edu/apples>).

APPLE PROJECT NEEDS

1. Professor Alschuler needs full time to devote to the APPLE project from the end of the second semester to the beginning of the Fall term to complete to bring 25 APPLES to the finished beta state, to translate the APPLES from FrontPage2000 to PBS's SERF, their cross-platform web course shell and web authoring program, and to integrate the APPLES into Project ACCESS.
2. Travel funds for Alschuler to meet with PBS programmers and technical experts 1) to learn the new web authoring program, 2) to work out bugs in the translation of APPLES from FrontPage200 to SERF, and 3) to integrate the APPLES into Project ACCESS programs.
3. A graphic artist is needed to create compelling home page backgrounds for the APPLES.
4. Interactivity in the APPLES should be increased: surveys online, problem sets, practice activities, etc.
5. Three national experts should review each APPLE for content accuracy and completeness. Suggestions should be included in the final beta form of the APPLES.

COST SHARING AND CONTRIBUTIONS IN-KIND: