

Date: March 14, 2000
To: Mr. Mike O'Kane
Special Advisor to the Vice President for Information Resources
From: Lynn R. Heinrichs and Gary A. Williams
Re: TLT Proposal

As Dr. Frank Prochaska forewarned you, we are submitting the attached proposal for TLT funding consideration.

Thank you for chatting with me on the telephone this morning and clarifying the question about indirect costs. We appreciate the opportunity to submit our project idea.

Web-based Graduate Education for Community College Faculty

Purpose of the Proposal

The purpose of this proposal is to implement a pilot study of Web-based course delivery that meets the common graduate education needs of community college faculty in western North Carolina. The proposed project will develop and implement two Web-based, graduate-level, business courses that can assist up to 50 community college faculty in meeting the SACS accreditation standard. The proposal supports the TLT Collaborative objectives by partnering WCU's College of Business with a service provider and community colleges in the region. The proposal also supports one of the College's strategic goals – "to expand opportunities for all stakeholders."

Overview of the Proposed Project

Community colleges across the state must ensure that their faculty meet the general accreditation standard of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS). Community college faculty should have a master's degree and eighteen semester hours of graduate credit in the field in which they teach. Community college faculty in Western North Carolina have few options in the region for completing graduate work, most of which involve commuting long distances and coping with mountain weather.

The College of Business receives a substantial number of inquiries annually to provide options for community college teachers to meet this standard. A logical, but untested, approach to meeting the needs of this geographically dispersed group is Web-based course delivery. Before committing substantial time and resources to delivering a complete set of offerings, the investigators propose a pilot implementation of two graduate-level, business courses that can accommodate up to 50 community college faculty during the 2000-2001 academic year. Assessment of the pilot will provide answers to the following questions:

- Is Web-based delivery an appropriate/desirable vehicle for reaching the community college faculty audience? What percentage of a complete program should be implemented using Web-based delivery vs. on-site courses?
- What is the impact of using a hosting/service provider? Does a provider simplify or complicate program delivery? What aspects of distance delivery seem most appropriate to outsource (e.g. course development, faculty training, technology support)?

The investigators will identify factors that are useful in selecting and supporting future Web-based programs for the College, for WCU, as well as beyond the campus. Building on collaborative experiences with other faculty at WCU and the community colleges will play a crucial role in the project's implementation.

Project Benefits

Several benefits will result from the proposed project:

- Graduate education will be offered to a new, geographically dispersed audience.
- The university will expand its Web-based course offerings.
- The number of faculty at WCU with distance delivery experience will increase.
- The institution will gain experience using a host/service provider.
- A collaborative relationship between WCU's College of Business and business faculty at community colleges will be forged.
- "Lessons learned" and expertise will be shared with interested groups both on-campus and off-campus, including the TLT Collaborative.

Project Assessment

In addition to the traditional course evaluation process, a comprehensive assessment of the pilot will take place after both graduate courses are complete. The investigators will examine the following:

- Effectiveness of delivery of graduate courses to community college faculty – factors such as: (1) number of students served; (2) contribution to student completion of the SACS requirement; (3) quality of instruction compared to on-site delivery; (4) limitations of instruction; and (5) student satisfaction with Web-based delivery.
- Comparison of course delivery using service provider vs. in-house technology – factors such as: (1) course development time; (2) downtime and quality of technical support; (3) availability of new products and technologies; and (4) limitations on instruction.

Disseminating/Sharing Results

The lessons learned from this project will be useful for both internal and external audiences. On the WCU campus, several groups are already involved in delivering distance education. The results of this project will add to the institution's knowledgebase of what works and what doesn't work. The investigators also expect to engage in dissemination of the results through the TLT Collaborative and other relevant venues. Options include presentations at workshops, development of a Web site accessible through the UNC PORTAL, one-on-one or group sharing of outcomes, and publication of results in academic journals.

Collaboration with other UNC constituent institutions over the long term is desirable to help community college faculty meet their graduate education needs. On-site and distance-learning courses throughout the state could be coordinated to offer a wide-range of options. Western Carolina University is willing to serve as coordinator as well as provider of these offerings over the long term.

| Budget Item | | TLT Contribution | WCU Contribution |
|--|-------|------------------|------------------|
| Service provider and hosting fees: | | | |
| Initial set-up by service | 3,500 | | |
| Annual licensing fee | 995 | | |
| Subscription for 50 students@\$115 | 5,750 | 10,245 | |
| Advertising and print costs (community colleges and faculty) | | 2,000 | 1,000 |
| Travel (to community colleges for consultation and recruiting) | | | 600 |
| Portable computing technology for faculty and support staff (four laptop computers and accessories @ \$2500) | | 10,000 | |
| Upgrades to College of Business Faculty Lab | | | 2,000 |
| Software | | 1,500 | |
| Staff/faculty training: | | | |
| On-site training – 1.5 days | 4,500 | | |
| Trainer expenses | 1,500 | 6,000 | |
| Graduate assistant (one academic year) | | | 6,000 |
| Faculty release time (one/semester) | | | 4,200 |
| Total Budget | | 29,745 | 13,800 |