

State Aid Grant Allocation:
COURSE MANAGEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES
EVALUATION PROJECT

Proposal Overview

Decisions concerning use of off-the-shelf course management and course development systems across UNC are increasingly strategic for multiple purposes and audiences:

- Supplementary materials for classroom and video-based courses
- Online courses developed and delivered by individual programs and departments
- Course materials developed to be shared across courses and programs
- Courses delivered as part of any UNC e-learning strategy
- Learning content developed for professional continuing education

It is important to distinguish between course management systems and content development solutions. At this time, course management systems tend to focus on the course-based interface between learning materials and teachers and learners (providing content repositories, activity tracking functions, simple online testing resources, communications components, access to national discipline-based learning libraries). However these systems tend to be light on tools and interfaces associated with content development and effective pedagogy for e-learning (pre-/post-assessment, interactive multimedia, adaptive learning environments). Content development will tend to be focused on specific learning goals/outcomes that are designed and developed at a more modular level than a course, and be combined in different ways to serve different courses, programs and audiences.

The market place offers a number of competing options in these areas, and has clearly not settled down yet in terms of common standards or even “product boundaries.” At the same time, the heavy engagement of our faculty and programs in online course development means that we are likely to pay a high price if we stand back as a system with no effort to explore common solutions and strategies. The advantages of cooperation reach into issues facing all of our campuses with regard to: consistency for our students, evaluation of learning effectiveness, professional development, technical support, assessment, common e-learning strategies, and procurement. Many campuses, as well as UNC General Administration, have expressed a keen interest in working cooperatively on efforts in this area--the advantages of increased cooperation and synergy are tremendous.

This project seeks a grant from the TLT Collaborative to foster a coordinated effort to research and implement decision-making tools and services that will assist UNC campuses, programs and General Administration to identify and implement strategic course management and content development systems and to determine strategic directions in this important area.

Project Purpose and Scope

Research and evaluate course management and development systems that will assist UNC campuses and General Administration in making strategic decisions. The Project Core Group will:

1. Research and report current use of course management and development systems across UNC and nationally. Explore related evaluation initiatives, emerging standards and trends, best practices, reports/surveys. Identify key components of course management and development systems and best-of-breed products associated with these components.
2. Develop common evaluation/decision-making criteria and processes to select course management tools and content development solutions (prioritized by measures of learning effectiveness, learner adaptiveness/A.D.A. compliance, feature sets and functionalities, ease of use/training resources, integration with other repositories of learning content and student data systems, market share/viability, potential for common usage across UNC, cost, technical requirements, and support issues.)
3. Develop and implement a process to recommend specific solutions for adoption by interested campuses and for strategic system-wide development/delivery services if these develop.
4. Survey campuses and determine opportunities for collaborative approaches to (a) adoption, (b) procurement, (c) shared hosting, (d) professional development, associated with common course management and course development solutions among campuses.
5. Research and report on emerging partnerships and alliances in the marketplace.
6. Research and report on how recommended course management and content development systems will serve learning environments that are (a) entirely online, (b) combine online with classroom and/or video-based teaching/learning.
7. Identify and develop a pilot community of experts in key areas of course content development and support. This community will be encouraged to:
 - Provide a community of discourse on these matters
 - Serve as a system-wide resource of consultants on these matters
 - Review evaluation strategies and tools
 - Populate the TLT Web site with content under this category and identify best practices
 - Recommend structures by which these communities might continue to operate beyond the timeframe of this grant. Feedback strategies, usability ratings, tools for ongoing evaluation

8. Provide a point of contact with DPI and NCCCS to increase cooperative efforts with these systems in the effective use of TLT by teaching faculty.
9. Work with UNC TLT Collaborative staff to develop and maintain a comprehensive online resource via the UNC TLT Collaborative Web site that will effectively communicate the services identified above to the offices, programs and staff of the sixteen campuses.
 - Identify individuals, skills and services throughout UNC
 - Provide dynamic interfaces (forms and listservs) to allow faculty, staff and students to contribute suggestions, and resources in a manner that ensures effective quality control and evaluation of published materials.
 - Provide a high quality gateway to critical state, national, global resources.
 - Capture and promote best practices, showcase campus efforts and examples of excellence.
 - List recommendations and standards associated with tools, equipment, skills, sets, and formats.
 - Provide a relevant online resource guide associated with development, testing and evaluation that can be maintained and updated for continuous quality improvement. This guide will allow for long-term maintenance and update; continuing relevance.
 - Create online communities for topical information sharing, discussion, expert consultation, and problem resolution.
 - Outlines, timelines, deliverables, current progress, will be available on the TLT project management site.

Project Outcomes

The importance and scope of the project requires involvement of all campuses in the UNC constituent institutions. To ensure this involvement, a project core group will be identified to lead the effort. The Core Group will consist of a lead Principal Investigator, three additional Principal Investigators, and six campus representatives.

The Core Group will research and identify course management and development systems, evaluation and testing criteria, and major trends. This group will also serve as a point of contact for the Department of Public Instruction and the North Carolina Community College System in order to share information and expertise.

In addition to the Core Group, campus respondent teams will be identified from each campus along with a roster of experts and consultants. The Campus Respondent Teams will focus on the evaluation of products in varied learning environments. Experts and consultants will be called upon to review evaluation strategies and tools. They will participate in dialog with all project participants.

All participants will assist in the systems analysis and will have input into recommendations submitted in the final report. At strategic intervals, interim reports will be made to the UNC Teaching and Learning with Technology Collaborative. In addition, information about the project's progress will be available on the TLT web site.

The recommendations of the project will serve as a foundation for UNC constituent institutions decision-making. The focus of the project will be the integration of optimal course management and development systems as part of the UNC distance education and e-learning strategy. These systems will be the foundation for ongoing development of learning initiatives to increase access to quality higher education for North Carolina citizens.

Feasibility

The scope of this project is extensive, and the resources and time are extremely limited. However, with the changing climate in higher education being brought about by rapid technological advancements, it is urgent that this investigative and exploratory project be carried out with the utmost expediency. The nature of the changes being forced upon the UNC constituent institutions require responsiveness, forward thinking, proactive approaches, and continuous improvement in the methods of course development, design, and delivery strategies.

Project Teams and Resources

Core Group (see appendix A)

Principal Investigators

A lead Principal Investigator and three additional Principal Investigators from various campuses

Campus Representatives

Representatives from six additional campuses

Campus Response Teams

Teams from each of the UNC campuses, comprised of five faculty, three administrators, and two information systems personnel, who will evaluate the selected course management and development systems and provide feedback on each system via an online evaluation instrument.

Community of Experts and Consultants

Provide a community of discourse and serve as a system-wide resource of consultants on online course management and development systems. Review evaluation strategies and tools for these systems and populate the TLT Web site with content under this category and identify best practices.

Teaching and Learning with Technology

The Collaborative actively explores collaborative opportunities and assists in defining and implementing best practices, common services and shared resources. Recognizing the broad range of issues associated with Teaching and Learning with Technology, the Collaborative functions variously as a think tank, research and testing service, strategic planner, information portal, professional development resource, resource development instrument, and a host for collaborative activities.

Proposed Period

The timeframe is fiscal 2000/01 (See appendix B.)

Budget

\$87,850.00
(See appendix C.)

Schedule Highlights

(See appendix A.)

Continuation

Online resource guide will provide a foundation for the continuation of this effort.

Community Involvement

Online Community for Discourse and the Campus Respondent Teams will provide for involvement from the entire UNC campus community.

Appendix A

Project Core Group

Name	Title	Organization/title
Diana M. Henshaw	Lead Principal Investigator	ECU Director of Continuing Studies
Kathleen D. Thomas	Principal Investigator	UNC-CH Manager CIT
Charles A. Bennett	Principal Investigator	UNC-A Director for Teaching & Learning
Henry T. Jackson	Principal Investigator	UNC-P Supervisor CIS

Campus Representatives will be identified from the following campuses:

Appalachian State University
Elizabeth City State University
North Carolina A&T
NC State University
UNC-Greensboro
Western Carolina University

Appendix b

Course Management and Development Strategies

Evaluation Project

Focus: Establishing evaluation criteria and testing methodology

Timeline

	July	August	September	October	November	December	January	February	March	April
Benchmarks	Determine the “Core Group” -Hold initial meeting of the Core Group. -Determine scope of the initiative -Develop materials for the core group -research Course Management Systems (CMS) and recent research.	-identify Course Management Systems currently in use in UNC constituent institutions -user survey -develop evaluation and testing criteria	Core Group finalization of 1) software vendors for expo 2) Plan vendor expo 3) Identify evaluation participants (Campus Respondent Teams) (10 per campus- 5 faculty, 2 CIS/Help Desk, 3 Administration	1) Develop format for evaluation of vendor products 2) Develop strategy for evaluation data collection 3) Strategy for hosting of course management system to be evaluated (where is it housed? Are we using the demo sites)	Core Group 1) discussing adoption strategies 2) identifying key alliances 3) organize vendor expo 4) select limited number of products to be evaluated 5) invitation to participate in testing and evaluation sent to campuses	-guidelines issued for applying the criteria on the selected products -incorporate materials into online resource guide	Testing and evaluations of course management and development systems	End of testing and evaluation period	-data from evaluations analyzed and results integrated into report -develop recommendations for the integration of the recommended Course Management and Development Systems into varied learning environments	Report of findings to GA
Activities	-identify six other campus representatives to serve with grant investigators to constitute the Core Group -seek input from GA e-learning group relative to goals and directions	Core group			Campus Respondent Teams			Core group		-review and submit final report
Outcomes	-identification of Core Group -identification of national standards	-identify major trends -interim report to TLT (end of August)	-confirm Campus Respondent Teams -develop roster of experts and consultants	-integrate Campus Respondent Teams and experts/consultants into an online community for discourse -update TLT project web site	-select viable systems for evaluation -roster of points of contact with DPI and NCCCS	- interim report to TLT	-all UNC campuses have opportunity to participate in testing and evaluation	-summary of testing and evaluation data -product were evaluated and rated to	-contribute to and support best practices expo	-report on findings and recommendations

Appendix C

	Amount	Quantity	Total	Explanation
Lead PI (salary and fringes)	\$24,780.00	1	\$24,780.00	Buy out portion of time
PIs	\$9,440.00	3	\$28,320.00	Buy out portion of time
Campus Representatives	\$4,000.00	6	\$24,000.00	Honorarium-12 days
Travel	\$10,000.00	1	\$10,000.00	Face-to-face meetings of Core Group,experts,consultants.
Communication	\$500.00	1	\$500.00	Telephone, fax
Supplies	\$250.00	1	\$250.00	Office supplies
			\$87,850.00	

Reviewed as to Form:

Associate Vice President – Legal