Developing an Automated Infrastructure for Supporting Faculty Development

Introduction

Our 4-year, mid-sized, regional, comprehensive public university is situated in the Northwest United States. Our 2006-2007 student enrollment is approximately 9,500 students. Our Department of Education at our university supports one of the largest teacher preparation programs in the state certifying close to 550 teacher candidates each year. Unfortunately, our institution does not have a centralized unit to provide educational technology support for faculty development of education instructors or instructors from other disciplines. The educational technology center, though not a university-wide department, is tasked with support education faculty and students, and to that end has assumed the role of providing educational technology support.

Available Technology and Faculty Skills

Despite the plethora of technology available at our institution and in the classrooms such as document cameras, data projectors, smart boards, DVD/CD players, e-portfolio and assessment systems and course management systems, most faculty including education faculty do not have the appropriate experiences which leads them to integrate technology in their classroom teaching practices. For our preservice teachers, this presents a monumental problem. Considering most pre-service teachers have little in-depth knowledge about pedagogy, instructional design, and technology when entering teacher education programs, it is critical that they are given an effective instructional model to emulate (Sheffield, 1996). Sadly, the vast majority of education faculty do not effectively model technology as an instructional tool nor do they effectively teach their students how to appropriate employ technology for instruction (OTA, 1995).

The Educational Technology Center's Goal

Consequently, the educational technology embarked on a goal of providing weekly workshops to education faculty. We faced two major challenges with this initiative: we only had a staff of two fulltime faculty in our department, and we didn't have the funds to create an infrastructure or funds to offer a stipend to the workshop facilitators. We believed the most powerful approach to conducting these workshops would be a hands-on experience for participants and workshops lead by faculty who were experienced in the technology and pedagogy.

Our "Automated" Website

An automated infrastructure was critically needed which could manage registration, a waiting list, reminder e-mails, a mechanism to unregister and track participants' current and future workshops. In addition, the ability to collect attendance data and produce reports was vital for accreditation needs. With the help of a part-time talented programmer who offered her services to us pro bono, over the course of six months we were able to build the infrastructure through a database-driven site to include many

additional features which we hadn't even considered. For example, the website is now set up to indicate "FULL" when a workshop as filled up, and allows people to change their profile and/or add their name to either the education faculty list or non-faculty list if not already listed. Through the website, individuals are able to suggest topics and volunteer to lead workshops in areas of their expertise. The administrator side of this website has evolved to include automatically generated hardcopy sign-in sheets with participants' names filled out, customized evaluation forms, and the ability to pull reports of attendance by department. The "archive" feature allows us to store previous workshops on our site, as faculty often request previously held workshops. Since The implementation of our workshop series in 2006 has been a phenomenal success. We've now expanded our offerings to include university-wide faculty and not just education faculty. This has also allowed us to tap into additional pool of faculty expertise from non-education departments who have led workshops. The tremendous demand and need these workshops has filled has led us to commit to providing weekly workshops every academic quarter. Our workshop website can be found at: http://websolutions.cwu.edu/ctl_workshops/

References

Office of Technology Assessment. (1995). *Teachers and technology: Making the connection.* Washington, DC: United States Congress Report #OTA-HER-616.

Sheffield, C.J. (1996). An examination of self-reported computer literacy skills of pre-service teachers. *Action in Teacher Education, 17*(4), 45-52.

Sherry, L. 1998. "An Integrated Technology Adoption and Diffusion Model." *International Journal of Educational Telecommunications*, 4 (2/3), 113-145.