INDIVIDUAL ACCESS APPLICATIONS: TRANSITION FROM TRADITIONAL TO ALTERNATIVE INSTRUCTIONAL DELIVERERY METHODS

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Institutions of higher education, which have traditionally required students to attend classes on campus at specific times, are beginning to offer classes via distance education. At one medium-sized university, this growth in distance education placed a strain on the audio/video facilities. To address this problem, the university initiated a summer program to explore the possibility of reducing faculty/student contact time that would free up the audio/video facilities.

Traditionally, distance education has referred to delivery of instruction through a two-way teleconferencing system. This method of delivering instruction is expensive and limits the number of classes that can be offered. In response to these problems, the university encouraged faculty to investigate possible alternatives for delivering course instruction. A stipend was offered as compensation for this activity and additional stipends were offered to those faculty willing to redesign and develop their course so that at least 50% of the course material could be presented outside the two-way teleconferencing facilities. The goal of the summer program was to explore asynchronous alternative instructional delivery methods, called individual access applications (IAA). The purpose of this paper is to present the planning process and outcomes of the summer program.

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PLANNING PROCESS AND ACTIVITIES

Initially, the Dean of the College of Education, the Director of Continuing Education, and select faculty met to discuss the objectives for the summer program. A series of objectives were defined for the project. These objectives were: (1) provide an overview of individual access applications; (2) learn about possible individual access applications, including Web-based applications and the implications for faculty, students, remote sites, and technical support; (3) demonstrate IAA based activities currently being used by the College of Education faculty as well as faculty at other institutions; (4) decide which courses are suited for IAA delivery; (5) identify the type and degree of technical assistance necessary to support courses; (6) develop sample exercises for the courses to be delivered; and (7) develop specific program proposals for future development.

In response to these objectives, the authors of this paper developed a series of activities that would help to meet the stated objectives. The activities took place both during three formalized meetings and independent exploration activities. The first meeting introduced faculty to the history of Web Based Instruction (WBI) and the tools used to develop and deliver WBI. Then, the faculty were asked to utilize some of these tools and explore some sample sites. At the next formal meeting the faculty were asked to brainstorm some of the good and bad practices they saw as well as ways in which they could use the tools in their own instruction. The faculty then independently developed matrices that matched course activities and objectives to appropriate IAA alternatives. During the final meeting the faculty were to identify training needs, hardware needs, additional release time needed, and the courses for which they could develop IAA activities.

CONCLUSION

At the conclusion of these activities, the faculty were to submit a list of the courses that would be adapted for at least 50% IAA. Interestingly, few faculty members were willing to adapt their courses until several questions were answered. First, who owns the "intellectual property?" Second, what technical support would be provided? Third, would there be technical support for the students? Fourth, who would support the hardware? Fifth, who would support the software?

A few faculty who plan to develop IAA based courses plan to use several of the IAA tools discussed during the summer sessions. These tools include the

publishing of course materials such as syllabi via the World Wide Web, the creation of online discussion sites, exploration of web based presentations using PowerPoint or streaming video, and the use of internet based teleconferencing to interact with students. By incorporating activities into their courses it is hoped that the faculty will achieve the goal of delivering at least 50% of their courses via IAA These faculty will be developing and field testing these application during the 1999-2000 academic year.