

Instructional Technologist (section 5c)

Final report for years 1, 2, and 3

Writers of this grant recognized the need for faculty support in the acquisition and effective use of technology. Not only is it important to provide funds for hardware and software, but money must be allotted for training and support in order to make best use of the hardware and software that are purchased. Therefore, funding was written into the grant for support of the Instructional Technologist position. Over the course of the three years, the grant support for the position would diminish and the institution's support of the position would increase so that by the end of the grant, Augustana College would fully fund the position.

Technology can enhance learning by encouraging exploration and analysis of information, by providing simulation of events and processes, by facilitating visualization of abstract concepts, by allowing manipulation of variables, by encouraging construction of knowledge, and by providing opportunities for drilling and practice of skills. Appropriate integration of technology allows the instructor to accommodate and helps to create engaged learners.

There are basically two types of technology integration: The first type simply makes it easier, quicker, or more efficient to continue teaching the same things in the same ways they've always been taught; The second type makes available new and better ways of teaching, encouraging instructors to re-think how they teach and how their students learn.

Integration of technology is not a "cure-all", but *thoughtful, meaningful, and authentic* integration of technology and information resources can *enhance* learning and lead to *development of* knowledge.

Following is a description of some of the activities of the Instructional Technologist during the course of grant:

- Developing the Augustana College Faculty Development website, <http://www.augie.edu/dept/facdev/> . The website includes links to faculty development resources, facilities (including information on technology-equipped classrooms), grants, and conferences.
- Presenting at Faculty Development Luncheons:
 - [“Why Integrate Technology?”](#) A discussion of the benefits of effective technology integration and a demonstration of examples of how to effectively integrate technology to have a positive impact upon student learning. (Note: I present a slightly altered version of this presentation more geared to K-12 teachers entitled [“Web Resources for Teachers”](#) to pre-service teachers in Julie Ashworth's and Becky Fiala's education classes.)
 - [“Building Community in Online Courses”](#) A review of the need for planning in instructional design of an online course in order to facilitate the development of a sense of “community” among the students in the course
 - [“Integrating Technology in the Information Age”](#) A look at ways to integrate information resources into the curriculum (Note: A version of this presentation, geared specifically for faculty in the [Humanities](#), was also presented.)
 - [“The Future of Web-Based Course Tools”](#) A review of the direction the area of learning management systems (LMSs) appears to be taking
 - [“Summer Technology Workshops and Summer Online Courses”](#) A presentation showing the format and content of the Summer Technology Workshop and discussing the process for developing the summer online courses.

- Offering of the [“Shadow Program”](#). Through a needs assessment we found faculty were in need of basic computer skills. We also found ourselves repeatedly being asked the same questions. Yet, when we offered formal group training, the sessions were consistently met with a low attendance. It seemed that people were, as Steven Covey puts it, “Too busy sawing to sharpen the saw”. They tended to know just enough to “get by” (albeit inefficiently). With a limited number of staff (2 full-time, plus workstudy help desk students) we were finding ourselves challenged to provide meaningful training that users would avail themselves of. Users would report that they didn’t want to “impose” on us, even though we tried to make ourselves as approachable as possible. So we came up with the idea for the “Shadow Program”. The program was based on our awareness that people develop habits in how they use computers – habits that are not always the best, easiest, or most efficient way of doing things. Tasks they do everyday – opening programs, saving files, using the web, wading through e-mail – often end up taking more time and involving more steps than necessary . Users miss opportunities for making computers work *for* them rather than *against* them. Through the Shadow Program, users are invited to schedule a time at their convenience when I can come to their offices and watch over their shoulder (“shadow” them, offering suggestions, based upon their unique needs and level of computer skills, on ways the user might more efficiently use the computer. Instruction includes things such as the following:
 - Helping the user organize and manage files, including making use of network drives;
 - Making accessing commonly-used programs and files more easy and efficient;
 - Installing productivity enhancing tools such as those which block annoying pop-up ads;
 - Customizing application interfaces to streamline those tasks performed most often, including teaching users how to set up the links toolbar in Internet Explorer;
 - Helping users learn to manage and organize their e-mail; and
 - Providing customized training addressing specific technology questions or concerns.

The program has met with a great deal of success, allowing me to reach and work individually with more than 50 people, including faculty, staff, and administrators.

- An outgrowth of the “Shadow Program” has been the [Online Help Desk](#) (which Help Desk Coordinator, Cheryl Swanson, maintains) and specifically the [Tips and Tricks](#) page, which is a joint effort by the Help Desk, Information Services, and the Instructional Technologist. We scheduled a series of meetings in which we gathered together members of various departments and asked them what tasks *they* frequently perform which they think technology might enable them to perform more efficiently. From those meetings, we developed the Tips and Tricks page, offering solutions to frequently-encountered problems in one easy-to-access location.
- An outgrowth of the Tips and Tricks page has been “Quick Tips”, in which answers to commonly-asked questions are sent weekly to all employees via e-mail. Topics have included:
 - Using the Custom Dictionary in Word
 - Sorting in Excel
 - Converting Text to Columns in Excel
 - Customizing Your Browser
 - Creating Desktop Shortcuts
 - Getting Rid of Spyware
 - Checking RAM and Hard Drive Disk Size
 - Defragmenting Your Hard Drive
 - Disk Cleanup
 - Ergonomics
 - Creating Personal Webpages
 - Where to Save Files
 - Accessing Your J Drive [network space] From Off-Campus
 - Inserting Foreign Characters

Each e-mailed Quick Tip includes a link to the Online Help Desk Tips and Tricks page. Sending these tips has proved to not only provide the *intended* benefit of offering helpful tips directly to users, but it also has provided an *unintended* benefit: users will frequently reply to the tips with *other* questions. The Quick Tips e-mail messages serve as a sort of “Hello, I’m here” message, inviting users to make use of my services.

- Working with individual faculty members to explore ways in which they might integrate technology into the teaching/learning environment. This would include helping faculty locate and integrate supplemental textbook resources, WebCT components and coursepacks, online resources, and course-specific hardware and software.
- Training individual faculty in use of the smart classrooms and smart carts, as well as other instructional technology on campus. [Instructions](#) for equipment use are available at the Online Help Desk.
- Serving as Augustana’s Online Learning Management Systems Administrator. This includes managing 200+ WebCT courses (not all are active in any given semester, however) and 1800+ WebCT users and now also includes, as a result of the Bush Faculty Development grants to Richard Swanson enabling him to try Moodle as an alternative to WebCT, managing [Moodle](#), on which we currently have 14 courses (some of which are only for faculty training) and roughly 250 users. I’ve also helped coordinate a discussion of the issues surrounding a possible migration from WebCT to Moodle (see Richard Swanson’s 5b Moodle and DVD final report for more detail on this ongoing discussion.) As the WebCT and Moodle Administrator, I create the course shells for faculty and then train them in the use of the particular learning management system. In most cases, I populate the courses for them (although some faculty choose to perform this step themselves.) At Augustana, we currently do not require faculty to use a learning management system. Therefore, part of my role as learning management system administrator is to make a case for the use of such tools when they can benefit the students and have a positive impact upon student learning.

With regard to the integration of technology into the curriculum, I firmly adhere to the philosophy that technology should not be used just because “it’s there”. Instead, it is imperative that the learning objectives drive any adoption of technology.

(Report submitted by Sharon Gray)