

# Instituting and Advocating Technology Training and Sharing of Ideas for Online Courseware

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## ABSTRACT

How can you invite and encourage faculty to share their knowledge and ideas about courseware? A successful faculty technology training program promotes interdepartmental collaboration and sharing of such information. This presentation will focus on key strategies used to promote technology sharing amongst faculty while assisting in courseware implementation, training, documentation, and support.

The issue of courseware purchase is not a unique one. Most universities have had an online presence for some time. The issues at hand in the decision of purchasing courseware for our university was:

- Resource limitations
- Size of faculty and staff
- Late adoption of courseware

Courses of action decided upon and taken to accomplish this goal included training of those who would instruct faculty, creating documentation, providing faculty workshops and other various support services.

## Categories and Subject Descriptors

K.3.1 Computer Uses in Education

## General Terms

Documentation

## Keywords

Courseware, training, documentation, collaboration

## 1. Introduction

A successful faculty technology training program promotes interdepartmental collaboration and sharing of such information. In January 2001, Valparaiso University Courseware Selection Committee chose to purchase and institute Prometheus online courseware by March 2001. This decision came with a challenge to have faculty trained and courses activated by Summer Session I

(May 22, 2001). Two years after our adoption of Prometheus, Blackboard Inc acquired Prometheus and a secondary training challenge began.

## 2. Key Strategies

The course of action decided upon and taken to accomplish this goal consisted of Electronic Information Services/Instructional User Support soliciting the services of University Instructional librarians, Courseware Administrators, and pioneering faculty. Each contributed expertise, experiences, and expectations to formulate the key strategies of training, workshops, open labs, mailing list, documentation, and support.

### 2.1 Training

Training objectives were accomplished by segmenting the courseware community into two specific levels of information support and delivery. Each community was challenged with its specific goals. Each community worked together to obtain the initial goal of implementing and sharing courseware knowledge.

#### 2.1.1 Technology Team

This team consisted of Electronic Information Services/Instructional User support collaborating with University Instructional Librarians, supported by Courseware Administrators. The main purpose of this team was to receive first level training of courseware and become first level information delivery.

#### 2.1.2 Faculty

Faculty participation in courseware usage is essential to a successful interdepartmental collaboration. Eight pioneering faculty were selected to test the courseware implemented. The main objective of the faculty was to review, advise, and support the courseware training team in regards to faculty overall perception and technological and pedagogical needs to complete a successful courseware implementation..

### 2.2 Workshops

Faculty workshops were scheduled for courseware training. Faculty received a stipend certificate for attending training. Test faculty were invited to share their experiences, courses, and how-to's by showcasing their online course to workshop attendees. This proved to be extremely motivational and inspiring for those in the workshop. First-hand pedagogical questions and concerns were addressed, along with technical training. Workshop schedule

consisted of morning technical training followed by a faculty showcase. A lunch, graciously provided by the provost's office, further encouraged faculty sharing of concerns about multiple sections, online testing, creative delivery of content, and class community. Afternoon hands-on help was provided for those who wished to begin creating and online presence immediately.

### **2.3 Open Labs**

To address the issue of providing one-on-one consultation and troubleshooting, courseware open labs were offered. These open labs were made available strategically to faculty days before and after the beginning of the semester. The open lab environment provided individual consideration and consulting to faculty requiring additional information, support, or technical assistance.

### **2.4 Mailing List**

A courseware mailing list was instituted allowing faculty and staff to communicate asynchronously and inform, advise, and troubleshoot through sharing of experiences.

### **2.5 Documentation**

Faculty attending workshop sessions received with step by step documentation on creating an online course. Electronic Information Services/Instructional User Support created FAQ's, and troubleshooting documentation along with workshop session documentation. All support documentation was available to the Valparaiso University community via website.

### **2.6 Support**

Creating and maintaining technical support dramatically impacts the success of any courseware implementation. At the beginning of the courseware implementation, Instructional User Support met with the Help Desk staff and coordinated special training sessions to train Help Desk staff and student workers. The guiding

principle of this training was that the courseware itself was used to create a training program for support staff. A sample course was created and the entire support staff had access to the course, which by example guided them through all aspects of creating an online course, while supplying troubleshooting techniques. This course was a key tool in addressing and answering faculty and student questions.

## **3. Summary**

The challenge of courseware adoption and implementation takes multilevel collaboration and cooperation. Knowledge gained from initial courseware adoption was instrumental in the secondary challenge of implementing and adoption of yet another courseware program. Using key training strategies not only promoted an initial courseware implementation success, but also set the groundwork for secondary adoption. Faculty were anxious to pioneer yet another courseware and mentor, advise, and assist colleagues. Technical staff had a proven successful plan of action for training, documentation, and support.

## **4. Acknowledgments**

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