



A Newsletter of the Staff Development Committee

Last Call On This Round of Online Course Development

Photos and Article by Paul Connell

Last summer, Sheila Booth, Kathy Frederickson, Wally Swett, Ken Wong, and Steve Zona worked on a pilot project with Ken Dwyer to develop online courses. Deb Downen and her staff supported them as they toiled through the summer heat to develop online resources and to navigate the arcane corridors of the Intralearn software interface that would be the “front end” for all their efforts. Kathy Frederickson reported that a real camaraderie developed and it was a true-cross discipline initiative. Everybody also reported that without Ken and Deb, it would have been impossible.

Almost everyone said that, since they were the first group to be run through the process, everybody spent a lot of time making mistakes that they probably wouldn't make the second time around. Ken has set up instructional design and technical support teams for the next groups that followed.

During the fall and part of this semester, I interviewed them on video. In the vignettes that follow, I collected their impressions of the experience by taking stills from the video and using their words.

In retrospect, a few common themes seem to emerge:

1. You don't have to be a technical guru to do this, but it helps if you are comfortable with Microsoft Word. Those who are technical gurus will probably have to spend less time wrestling with the software. Generally, if you use Word and PowerPoint effectively, you can stop worrying about the technology. If you can put together web pages, you're golden!

2. It's a lot of work. It will probably be less work for the faculty who are going through now, but it still is a time eater. All the faculty I interviewed report that they had to rethink and redesign how to deliver course material because the technology imposed as many limitations as it did opportunities. The asynchronous nature of the learning also poses design challenges. Ken Dwyer is fond of saying that “The technology is not the course design. It's the impediment.” We have people in place to help you with both.
3. The support systems to help you through the process are much better than they were for the first group. Technical and instructional design, in particular, have been more clearly delineated.
4. You get paid for this and you get some property rights on the course.

✿ **If you are considering doing this, Cathy Livingston has extended the application deadline to March 3!** —Call Cathy Livingston's office for details, or drop by and pick up a form.

If you can't make the deadline or if you're terrified by the technology, there are a number of workshops coming up. I'm teaching a *FrontPage* Seminar at 2:00 p.m. in the Harrington Center on March 23 and 30, and there is also a *PowerPoint* Seminar at the end of this week. These are open to all faculty.

Ken says that most of these seminars are open to everybody, whether you are developing a course or not. Check the web page at:

<http://www.qcc.mass.edu/IT/Helpdesk/ITTraining.htm>

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<u>Deadline</u>	<u>Publication Date</u>
March 21	March 23
April 18	April 24

Edited by Paul Connell
(and Mr. G4)



Online Courses *Continued*

The IT series of training sessions are being offer to help our faculty make the best of specific technologies available to them on this campus. To get the most of these sessions we recommend a **Level I** ability in **Basic Microsoft Office Skills**. If you are unsure what your skill level is click here to try our anonymous [Skills Inventory](#). All training sessions are held in 377A from 2:00 PM to 4:00 PM.

Training Session Offerings

Session #	Session	Dates
IT 100	Preparing Graphics for the Web (2 Weeks)	2/16/01 and 2/23/01
IT 101	Using PowerPoint in the classroom and On the Web	3/2/01 and 3/9/01
IT 102	Creating a Course Homepage with FrontPage (2 weeks)	3/23/01 and 3/30/01
IT 103	Online Course Development with Intralearn (3 Weeks)	4/6/01, 4/13/01, 4/20/01, & 4/27/01

Online Instructors Share Their Insights

STEVE ZONA—MAT 123, College Math I



It's been a learning opportunity. I knew it would be a challenge. I knew it would be a lot of work, but it was during the summer, so I had the time. I'm glad I did it during the summer. I really needed the time to learn all the software and develop all this stuff, but looking back at this, I now have so much to show for it.



I'm also teaching a traditional class in precalc, and with all the time that I'm putting in—putting all these different worksheets on line, it's ready to print out for them as well.

It's making me work harder but I've got a lot to show for it and when I look at the end product, I really have a lot done. It's all there on the web. I don't have to go to class carrying all this cumbersome information. In fact, I don't have to go to class.



I see a couple of students in my class who just got out of high school. Perhaps they didn't place well on the placement test. They're doing it online. They told me that they had all this in high school. They've done it already. This class is a piece of cake. So, it's working pretty well for them. They don't have to sit in class three times a week.

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Zona, continued

Of course, the disadvantage for some is that they miss the structure. They don't have the human touch of group activity or the time commitment of lectures and they miss it. It's not for everybody.

On the other hand, I have people saying "I work 60 hours per week. This is perfect for me. I can do it from ten to midnight."

It should be easier for the next group of faculty going through, because the first group made all the mistakes. Each semester will get easier for incoming groups because we build our knowledge base, but it will always be a lot of work. But it would depend on the subject area too. A computer teacher, teaching computer science on line would have a headstart over most of us.

One good thing about this experience is that I did finally get to make a homepage on the web, something I probably never would have done if I hadn't gotten involved with this project.



I've got the bug now. On my home page I want to do all these animated gifs. I'm really looking forward to developing this further.

KATHY FREDERICKSON—ENG 101, English Composition and Literature I and ENG 102 English Composition and Literature II (Under Development)



I have some basic computer skills and I taught in the English computer lab, but I'm really very low-tech and I don't think that English, as a discipline, needs to be high-tech.

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Frederickson, continued.

E-mail has been our main vehicle [for ENG 101]. I have them attach papers, typed in Word. Most of my students have some savvy with Word and e-mail. The advantages are that the student gets a lot of individual attention and much of the content of the course is aimed at meeting individual needs. That takes up a lot of time. You have to get to know people in ways other than meeting with them on Mon/Wed/Fri. It gets tricky. In some ways it's a sea of anonymity, but in other ways it's far more personal because you develop a two-way e-mail relationship. I do get to know their academic stuff fairly quickly. I have to compensate for that lack of face-to-face relationship. And, that's something a lot of them are saying they miss. The discussion board is good, but it doesn't take the place of the spontaneity of the classroom, it doesn't take the place of the facial expressions or hand gestures. Exclamation points in the text work, but aren't a substitute for the connectedness you feel in the classroom.



What would I do differently? Next semester, I'm going to keep a folder on each person, which is different from what I thought would work—keeping a folder on each assignment, so that people's drafts would go into each assignment folder. But, what I found was that—there are so many questions—so much communication going on, that things get overwhelmed. I have trouble tracking all this stuff. All those communications will comprise a folder—a portfolio for the person, and I can track what I said in earlier responses to the student.



You need to keep your sense of humor, too. Sometimes your efforts don't produce the result you expect. I put in a little animation of a recycling logo, just to remind them of consumer consciousness of recycling. Well, they tried to click on it like a link. They thought it was a link to Consumer Reports and started e-mailing me that the link didn't work and I better fix it.



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Frederickson, continued.

One student reported that he felt more confident that the online format allowed the person grading his paper to concentrate solely on the merits of his presentation, rather than things like body language and other extrinsic factors.

For instance, I have a married couple. One is in a wheel chair and one has another disability. For them, this has been great. They're tutoring each other and have advanced computer skills. There's even a little healthy competition developing between them. I have two young women with babies and for them it has been cute. They can send Jpeg pictures of their babies. I have some students who are participating through the consortium.

Should faculty with minimum computer skills be willing to try this? Well, my answer to that is that if I can do it, anyone can. And, we don't have to go it alone. Throughout this, we've had great support. If I thought I had to do this all by myself, I wouldn't have succeeded.

One funny surprise is that when finally I got to meet them, many of the students didn't look like what I'd imagined them to look like. And, it must have been the same for them. One student said, "Gee, I didn't think you'd be so young." [It's a tough job, but someone has to do it.—p.c.]



SHEILA BOOTH, HUM 142, Internet Communications and ENG 255, The American Short Story (Under Development)



I became interested in doing this project because I had spent so much time developing internet resources for this class that I teach on site, face to face. I perhaps didn't have to spend as much time as other faculty developing new resources. What I spent a lot of time on was learning the structure of Intralearn

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Booth, continued.



Along with writing assignments, the core of the American Short Story Course, which I'm developing as an online course, will be the discussion board.



One of the things I like to do with my students in writing courses is to improve and enhance their computer literacy. One way to do it is to give them some software that encourages them to take initiative to publish their work and to see the work of other students—if you use that discussion forum not just to discuss, but to upload assignments. And this is one of the things students commented on this as a real plus.



Another advantage that students have told me about is that you can move at your own pace in an online course. A student who is very involved and responsible might otherwise feel the need to slow down. In an online course, they can move at their own pace. It's much more flexible for students—sometimes you see postings at 12 midnight. They can work at those times but we don't offer classes at those times, until now.



For faculty considering getting involved in this, it will make you rethink the way you structure your courses. You end up rethinking learning techniques and how scheduling affects this. It also enhances your own on-site courses.

Many of the people who went through this for the first time did not consider themselves computer whizzes, but they got through it. If you can use Word, you can use Intralearn.

Online, students do see that there are different modes of writing. Discussion forums are less formal. They can later develop some of that discussion into a more formal assignment. They become aware of the importance of audience. Additionally, the log function of discussion board makes your evaluation of their discussion more effective.

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KEN WONG— HST 215, American Ethnic History

I wanted to try something new. I had seen some history courses on line and I wanted to give it a try—to see if I could teach history better that way. I saw the way other history courses used links and I thought I might be able to do something similar, to set up virtual field trips, for instance—which I do in my course, with a link to the National Park Service’s Ellis Island.

I spent a lot of time looking for links, with credibility. What helped me was history pages pointing me to other links. I discovered the Library of Congress. I also discovered the National Archives link. The Library of Congress had an interesting website on Chinese immigration, for instance. I was able to download a picture of a Chinese laundry, in Holyoke, Mass., in the first decade of the 20th century—1904. You can see the front of the store and the interior of the store. It’s things like this that can enrich the content of the course. It allows students to access primary sources on the web.

Things are easy to get to for the students, in the sense that I’ve done the digging. When I first started the course, I thought I might have them come up with a website that was related to the topics, but I decided against that. I found that I was overwhelmed a bit, searching for sites, and I had a sense of what I was looking for. I didn’t want to throw them out unguided into cyberspace. All the sites have photos and artifacts but there are text-based ones too.

Textbook companies as well have websites that enhance their books. But my particular course is not textbook based, so I had to create my own materials.

Teaching online gives students more opportunities to participate in discussion. More students participate and the comment are better developed and more thought out. The ones who are shy and reluctant to participate are less intimidated. I think better developed, because students are aware that they are going to be read by other people. Oddly enough, I happen to have a student who is taking my online course, while taking another on-campus



Wong continued.
traditional course, The student doesn't participate in classroom discussion, but participates actively in online discussion.

I use written exercises as my evaluation tool—three to four essay questions weekly that they e-mail me. The idea of weekly assignments is to keep them involved. There's a written mid-term and a written final. It's highly writing and reading intensive.

What would I do differently? Well, I'd meet with students the first week and emphasize that they really need to be computer savvy—that we don't have time to teach them. And, secondly, as far as my online history course goes, that it's writing intensive and reading intensive. Just because we don't meet three hours per week, doesn't mean less time. I'm factoring that in.

My advice to people considering developing online courses? You've got to be flexible. You've got to learn the software, which is pretty much the same as learning other software packages, but sometimes it can be tough when you feel the software is impacting your pedagogy. It's a lot of work.



Wally Swett— PSY 273, Chemical Dependency

Wally is conspicuous by his absence in these pages, ironically so, because he was a major contributor to this project. He has been ubiquitous—at every demo, at all the training sessions, his basso voice leaves a kind of resonance in the room, ten minutes after he's left for his next appointment. He's been so busy with this, that he's hard to pin down. However, we aren't going to let him off the hook. Ken and I plan to use him for voice-overs in some of the video we've shot.

Thank you for your patience with this issue. If you turned an article in, it will be published in the March 27th issue. I had so much info on these faculty members that it filled up eight pages. After working so hard all summer, I think they deserve some Kudos.

If you wish to write an article about a seminar you've attended or even to toot your own horn about your program revue, please e-mail it to me at: pconnell@qcc.mass.edu Finally, Ken Dwyer and Deb Downen and their staffs, who quietly sat on the sidelines and made things happen deserve a standing ovation.

Coming Next Month—

1. All the articles you've turned in.
2. Public College Sex Festival in Pennsylvania Affects Funding