

Technology and General Education: Collaboration for Curriculum Building and Student Learning

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Abstract

As part of a complete revision of its general education curriculum, the University of Saint Francis has developed a partnership among faculty, Education Technology Center staff, and an outside constituent to ensure that our students become MOS certified in Word, Excel and PowerPoint. Furthermore, because the certification will seamlessly align with the general education curriculum, the university will be able to assess students' ability to meet the outcomes of our curriculum by utilizing a nationally accepted technology test. This presentation will describe the process that faculty and technology specialists engaged to develop this component of the general education curriculum. Presenters will illustrate a model for collaborative technology curriculum building and participants will be able to contextualize this process for their institutions through the interactive presentation.

Note: The author has included his powerpoint slides in lieu of a paper.



Catalyst for Change in "Technology" Requirement

- University began discussions of revising general education curriculum in 2000. The curriculum had not been revised since the late 1970's.
- University decided to move from a cafeteria based system, where specific course corresponded to a specific GE requirement, to an outcomes based system.
- In Fall 2002, began to devise overall outcomes based around question "What academic experiences do we want an USF student to leave with"



Role of Technology in General Education Curriculum

- Previous General Education Curriculum asked students to "demonstrate computer competency" through passing a course or a "test out" option administered by the Business Department
- Test and class did not share same outcomes (i.e. the placement test was not the final in course).



General Education Committee and Technology

- Committee believed technology had to be integrated across curriculum, but with a base line entry point.
- Committee also believed that different programs require different technology needs.
- After several all-day committee retreats and several all faculty meetings, the following outcome statement were approved by the faculty in Spring 2004.



Faculty Driven Curriculum Changes

- **Demonstrate competence in applying current and emerging technologies.** (0 cr)
 - ~ **Illustrate proficiency in a variety of computer-based communication and presentation applications.**
 - By placement
 - Mandatory reinforcement in major
 - ~ **Research, evaluate, and apply information using technology.**
 - English common content course
 - Mandatory reinforcement – writing intensive distribution course
 - Mandatory reinforcement in major
 - ~ **Integrate changes in technology within their discipline.**
 - Mandatory reinforcement in major



Highlights of this statement

- 0 credit hours designated---overall package was streamlined from 53-54 to 46-48.
- Does this mean a loss of importance for technology?---Emphatic NO from faculty!
- Mandatory Reinforcement in Major--- Committee/Faculty wanted to integrate technology within major.
- However, committee faced with curricular logistics about how to achieve our outcome.



Bring in the Calvary

- Turned to our Instructional Designer (and overall technology guru), Tina Strobel.
- Series of meetings begin in Fall 2005 to work out how to achieve outcomes--- focus on collaboration and collegiality
- Tina asked the faculty questions



Expectations

Q. How technology literate do we want USF graduates to be?

- Exposed and familiar with technology for major & critically literate in use of technology.
- Meet Microsoft's core competencies.
- Meet Microsoft's expert competencies and "excel" above other institutions' graduates.

A. Diversity says we want a combination of the three.



Software Importance

- Most courses require some type of assignment that utilizes **Word** processing skills.
- Many courses require **PowerPoint** presentations.
- Few courses require an assignment be completed in **Excel** (a table from Word may be adequate). But spreadsheet concepts can be important for many jobs.
- **Internet research** and **file management** are equally important for successful completion of course work.
- Ability to critically analyze use of technology in all majors fundamentally important to faculty



Goal

In the end, USF's technology goal is to educate each student in technology in order to help him or her be a critically literate student and citizen.

So the question remains, *how* do we educate and assess the technology skills of our students?



Who are our students?

Beginners-typically non-traditional students who have had very little exposure to *working* on a computer.

Intermediate-students who can surf the web and check email but haven't used the *features* of a computer.

Techno Savvy-students who use a computer to *complete* work on a daily basis and are very comfortable with various software's.

Students with Disabilities.



Break apart CIS 190

CIS 190 currently includes Word, Excel, PowerPoint and basic computer concepts.

- Proposing to break apart the class as follows:
 - Word Core
 - Word Expert
 - Excel Core
 - Excel Expert
 - PowerPoint
- Each counting as 1 credit hour and preparing the student for MOS (Microsoft Office Specialists) Certification-either Core or Expert.
- Depending on the option chosen by faculty, Certification may not be required, but would be available to the student should they choose to take the test.



Course Schema

In-house placement test for all students
CIS 100 for beginners
Series of one hour course to obtain
MOS certification
Programs decide which certification
needed



Beginning Computer Student

- Offer an *Beginning Computers* (CIS 100) course.
- The course would be *Free* (funded through technology fee) and offered through the ETC, but put into the schedule for student registration.
- 5 week course
- Meet 2x per week for 75 min. each meeting.



Techno Savvy Student

Take the Word, Excel and PowerPoint MOS (Microsoft Office Specialist) exam at a cost of \$65 each. (possibly lower depending on quantity of students expected to take it)

Student then have the MOS certifications to add to their resume.

Upon Certification Student will receive 1 cr. hr. for each certification.

If the test isn't passed, the student can take the three Modules of Word, Excel and PowerPoint to better prepare for the next test.



MOS – Skill Standards

Why Certify?

According to [Certipoint](#):

For employment seekers, Microsoft Office Specialist certification:
Differentiates and helps job candidates get hired. Research shows not only do Microsoft Office Specialists find work faster, they also earn up to 12% more than individuals who are not certified
Provides a firm measure that validates Microsoft Office training
Gives credibility and substance to work skills.

Microsoft Office Specialist certifications have been recommended by the American Council on Education (ACE) for college credit. Candidates who achieve certification can [apply for college credit](#) through participating ACE member institutions.



Where are we and How is it going?

- New General Education Curriculum will roll out in Fall 2007.
- Finalize plans and budget for development of in-house placement in late April of 2006.
- Tina Strobel's movement to a different institution, as with every other small school, is a concern in loss of knowledge and leadership.



Discussion Points and Questions

Lessons Learned

- Why Change General Education Curriculum?---curriculum must be continually updated
- How to Change?---Collaboration & Communication with all parties a key.
- Pace of Change?---Be ready for the long haul!