IITG Mid Year Project Report : Entry # 195

Name of Principle Investigator:

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IITG Project Title (truncated)

2014-Westbury-Smith-Collaborative Media Center

1) Please consider the original timeline and deliverable targets. How is your project progressing compared with the original estimates?

We are on target for almost all of the timeline estimates laid out in our proposal. Fall term we linked two courses (Media Studies and New Media) and focused on improving our website and online video tutorials. To date we have created (and continue to update as platforms change) over 70 short online video tutorials (created by CMC student fellows) supporting a variety of tools including audio slideshows, interactive timelines, audio, video and image editing, blogs, online portfolios and more. Each term a new staff of students (fellows, interns, work study staff and volunteers) use the open educational resources to train themselves and then to support their peer tutoring sessions. Students in linked courses use the resources to create community engaged or research based media projects.

For the spring term we have laid the groundwork for our new first year pilot in an attempt to more systematically expand digital literacy across the student population. This term we have four linked first year sections participating and have designed digital literacy projects with each professor. These include audio slideshows, interactive timelines and blogging. Additionally we will have at least three upper division linked courses across the curriculum. These projects include a wide variety of tools, including online video editing and online portfolios. We have designed baseline assessment forms to be distributed at the second class meetings, before any CMC work begins. We have also planned class visits and workshops to support this work.

We are a bit behind our timeline projections for our community database, IDEA SPACE. Creating the online elements for the database took much longer than expected, but is now ready for testing. Additionally, inspiring community partner participation has proved more challenging than expected. The database backend is now complete and we are now able to launch a wider call for community partner contributions, however, this is on hold while we focus on our First Year pilot. Despite this small setback, four students were able to create community based projects based on offline IDEA SPACE contributions last term. Moving forward, we are rethinking the IDEA SPACE model and considering a more focused issue, ideally supported by additional issues-based funding, and linked events, such as speakers. Alternatively, without additional support, we will likely move to internal seeding of the database by assigning student fellows to research and contribute to the database, while continuing to invite linked professors and community partners to contribute if they wish.

2) How is spending progressing when compared with the original budget estimates? (You may also choose to detail issues regarding access to funds in the next three questions).

We are on track with our budget planning. Because so much planning happens over the fall term, we save most of our funds for the spring term, when we have many more linked courses. We also try to maintain a reserve fund for coding and back in website issues that might arise, but then we find we must rush to spend that "emergency slush" fund quickly at the end of the grant period.

3) Please provide feedback regarding your experience with the project execution, in particular any issues or roadblocks you've encountered that may have been unexpected.

This is not unexpected, but one roadblock is our dependency on annual funding with no knowledge of funding for the following year. This makes mid-range and long-term planning difficult and requires us to "restart" many things every

fall. Moving forward, the project would be much improved with a longer funding cycle to allow for mid-range planning and a larger budget to provide for at least a part-time staff person to coordinate projects. We are in the process of looking at additional funding sources that might support such growth and planning.

4) What are your positive observations or pleasant surprises about your team's interaction or project process that might would be helpful to other PI's?

One of the most positive observations of this project has been the growth of our peer-tutors and student media fellows. The amount they learn from teaching other students is powerful and watching them develop their skills, both technically and interpersonally, is very rewarding. Also the power of some of the issues brought out when our students create new digital works that reflect their unique experiences is always inspiring. We have seen many powerful projects around current social issues including police brutality, sexual assault, economic justice, education reform, as well as a number of projects focused on important social history. Also, as the director of the project, I have enjoyed the opportunity to work with colleagues across the disciplines. A not so pleasant surprise, but one that validates the importance of this project, has been the uncovering of the depth of lack of digital literacy among many of our students and the confronting of what seems to be a common assumption among the faculty that digital natives are digitally savvy and thus do not need digital instruction. Engaging in this digital literacy initiative has allowed me to see that the need is much greater than anticipated, with far more students needing basic instruction than expected. This is a sad observation but one that makes us realize the importance of this project, leaving us even more determined to grow this project and share our outcomes across the system and beyond.

5) Please describe any challenges you've encountered working with your project team that you've found solutions for that might be helpful to other PI's.

The biggest challenge we have encountered is time. Everyone is over extended. I would encourage other PI's to consider their own time and the time of their colleagues in project planning. To resolve this, in the short term, we rely on Skype meetings and shared online documents for collaboration. In the long run, we will need to explore ongoing release time and/or staffing.