**Project Name**

Supporting the needs of 21st Century Learners: Faculty Development with Tools of Engagement

**Principal Investigator** Nathan Whitley-Grassi

**Campus** Empire State College

**Year of Project** 2012

**Tier** Tier One

**Project Team**

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**Overview Summary**

Creation of four module-based blended training units which will be designed to introduce ESC faculty and staff to several types of Web 2.0 technology tools (social media, document sharing, etc.).

**Outcomes Summary**

Interactive modules on how to use Google, blogging tools, and creation of multimedia files are available on the Empire State "Tools of Engagement" site.

**Project Abstract**

This project is based on work done in the University of Buffalo Tools of Engagement project* Based on feedback shared at this year¹s CIT (2012), this program has been successful and popular among students and is believed to have increased their technology skills with the tools presented.

The Faculty Instructional Technology (FIT) group at Empire State college is seeking funding to adapt portions of the Creative Commons licensed tutorials and resources developed at the UB site to create an engaging curriculum designed for faculty and staff development in the use of common technology tools in higher education institutions, with the goal of developing 21st century digital literacy for themselves and the learners that they serve.

As the regional centers of Empire State College (ESC) are set up across the state, ESC would make an excellent development and testing site for for future-coordinated multi-site SUNY initiatives. In this pilot, we plan to evaluate the effectiveness of a series of distributed professional development workshops and create open source materials that may later be scaled up to a multi-campus audience.

As faculty instructional technologists, we are all aware of the need for faculty and professional staff to develop their own 21st century skills to better serve the learning needs of today¹s students. We believe this program, which combines both independent and collaborative learning, through the use of engaging tools and social media, will help this audience become familiar with a core set of tools for teaching and learning that will emphasize three key elements: simple tasks, user friendly technologies, and an emphasis on sound pedagogical applications.

Four modules (See Project Timeline) for introducing the various tools will be designed by our instructional technologists, who will base their work on the UB original site design. The modular design of the project allows participants to pick and choose the learning modules that would benefit them in terms of needs and time availability, while keeping participants from getting discouraged if they are unable to complete one or more modules. Upon successful completion of each module, participants will have met the following objectives:
1) Learned about the use of and sound pedagogy for the tool(s) presented;
2) Demonstrated basic use of tool(s) presented;
3) Actively engaged with other participants through the use of blog or social tools,
4) Provided a demonstration for individual assessment of proficiency including feedback from instructional technologists.

Participants in this project will be exposed to several pedagogically sound principles including; developing stronger faculty-student contact, creating more opportunity for peer collaboration, increasing student motivation and engagement, and fostering transliteracy and 21st century skills in our students. Each module will be developed in a way that specifically emphasizes how these tools could be applied to being a digital citizen; informs how to incorporate 21st century literacy into his or her own teaching; and, most importantly, if adopted, can increase student engagement and learning across disciplines. Participants will be drawn from a variety of disciplines from across the college¹s centers, and participants will be encouraged to collaborate and discuss modules and activities with peer groups through the use of social tools.

Ideal Project Length is one semester with four one-month-long modules. Primary content delivery will be done through an open source (Creative Commons licensed) web site. In addition, local faculty instructional technologists will lead group meetings to introduce the program which will be held at the start of the term at each center. This will allow faculty to connect with peers in the project and to be sure that they are comfortable with the site. A second group meeting will be held at the conclusion of the semester to debrief and wrap up with faculty. In addition to group meetings at the start and end of the term, Faculty Instructional Technologists will be available by appointment to assist faculty and professional employees who need additional guidance in order to aid in the learning process and minimize frustration. However, the primary goal would be to develop a self-guided program for future deployment at other campuses and/or sites.

This pilot project at ESC will include an evaluative study of effectiveness and participant experience in order to validate and further develop the effectiveness of the program. This study will take a mixed approach to better triangulate results. All participants will be asked to complete pre- and post assessments to gauge technology competency and confidence. In addition, focus groups will be held to gather data on participant experience.

If successful, we will propose a future phase two of this project in which this program will be developed in a grass roots approach wherein groups operating across the SUNY system will be invited to participate through establishing partnerships, social networking and the distribution of material.

We hope to incorporate incentives into the project, including certificates or badges, which will be made available for the completion of each module, in order to motivate participants as they work to complete the program. Upon completion of this project, it is our hope that participants will gain a better understanding as well as practical tools with which to draw on these technologies in their work with students thereby increasing student engagement and learning across disciplines. Beyond that it is our hope to develop a metric capable of assessing the success of this pilot and the feasibility for future development and distribution.

**Reports and Resources**

- Project website

**Faculty Development**

- Faculty Digital Literacy
- Organizational Models of Faculty Support

**Instructional Design**

- Online Education