New Technology Fee RFP Process

The office of Information Technologies and Resources (IT&R) is currently working to further automate the technology fee proposal submission process by providing a web-based form that can be accessed from any computer. These forms should be available to the UCF community on Aug. 8 for submissions of FY 2011-2012 proposals.

To assist those considering submitting a proposal, PDF proposal forms are available at http://itr.ucf.edu/techfee and may be used as a tool to start developing a proposal. Please do not submit printed or PDF proposals. Use the online forms only.

IT&R will also conduct a second proposal-writing workshop from 1:00-2:00 p.m. on Monday, Aug. 29 in the Student Union's Cape Florida Ballroom.

Dates to remember:

July 15 —
Technology fee annual reports due

Aug 8 —
Online proposal form goes live at http://itr.ucf.edu/techfee

Aug. 12 —
Deadline to complete OIR walk-throughs and network services estimates for 2011-2012 proposals

Aug. 29 —
Tech fee proposal writing workshop (Student Union, Cape Florida Ballroom, Room 316AB, 1:00 p.m.)

Sept. 16 —
Academic year 2011-2012 technology fee submission deadline (5:00 p.m.)

IT&R Receives Next Generation Learning Challenges Grant

The University of Central Florida has developed a national model for blended learning, a practice that combines web-based learning with classroom instruction.

UCF has received a $250,000 grant from the Next Generation Learning Challenges (NGLC) program, funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and managed by EDUCAUSE, a nonprofit association that advances the use of information technology to advance higher education.

With the grant, UCF will develop a "Blended Learning Toolkit" that will include: strategies for blended course design and delivery; blended-learning models for composition and algebra courses; assessment and data collection protocols; and "train-the-trainer" materials.

The toolkit and course models will be provided to the American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU), UCF's partner in the project. The association will engage 20 of its member institutions, which will use the kit's course templates and models, or build their own courses using the strategies and resources provided.

"This project will bring national and international recognition to our leadership in the field of online learning, and will bring exposure to our faculty and the groundbreaking work they are doing reinventing instructional approaches for math and composition curricula," said Tom Cavanagh, assistant vice president for UCF's Center for Distributed Learning.

The benefits of blended learning are many. For universities, blended courses encourage collaboration and compensate for limited classroom space. For faculty, they can be a method to infuse new opportunities for engagement into established courses. For students, the courses offer convenience combined with active engagement and interaction.

Students consistently rate UCF's blended courses higher than other modes of delivery in their course evaluations. UCF's blended learning courses also have the highest levels of student success and the lowest withdrawals of any modality, including purely face-to-face.

"This project will allow other institutions to benefit from UCF's highly successful online learning and assessment models," said Joel Hartman, vice provost for Information Technologies and Resources. "There is great potential for future adoption beyond the initial project participants, and what we create and learn through this project will ultimately benefit UCF and our students."

21st Century Library

The library building — the oldest on campus — is in need of a facelift. In 2003, the library design firm Holtzmann-Moss was contracted to develop a concept for a library renovation and expansion. The resulting design, though magnificent, proved too costly in an era of declining PECO funding.

We have taken a fresh look at the university's long-term library resource needs and propose a new and innovative approach. The proposed solution is to renovate the existing library and accommodate collection growth through the addition of an automated retrieval center (ARC). An ARC (see http://www.automatedlibrarysystems.com for an example) is a self-contained, densely packed robotic retrieval system capable of storing millions of books and periodicals in a structure with a footprint of only a few thousand square feet. By employing an ARC, the library could place approximately 600,000 frequently circulated items on open shelving, another 1.5 million items in the ARC and the rest of the collection (typically older or infrequently circulated items) in remote storage, such as the shared SUS shared storage facility being planned in Gainesville. An ARC can be constructed as an adjunct to the current library within existing site constraints.

A second factor suggesting this approach is the continued migration of library resources into the electronic domain. Although the vision of the totally online comprehensive library has yet to be realized, the relative proportion of electronic resources continues to increase annually.

A third factor is the changing use of the library's space and services by students. Today, students need flexible furnishings rather than fixed collaboration spaces or individual carrels, and widespread access to the use of technology — both the library's and students'. The best current example of this trend is the Knowledge Commons. At almost any time of day, that area can be seen filled with students using the space for a wide variety of activities. This is the prototype for the kinds of spaces the library needs to provide throughout the building.

With this approach, new library acquisitions would first be placed on open shelving, then flow from shelves to the ARC, and then to off-site storage as usage warrants. This would make it possible to expand the collection indefinitely within the scope of the proposed plan. Other leading institutions facing the same constraints as UCF (student growth, restrictions on construction funding and expanding library resource needs) are adopting the ARC approach.

News about the 21st Century Library project will be released as planning progresses.

In the long-term, the program could be distributed to the more than 420 AASCU member colleges and universities. In addition to developing a blended learning infrastructure at AASCU institutions, the project seeks to increase access to education and improve student success and retention. The NGLC program specifically targets improving college readiness and completion among low-income students.

At UCF, blended learning is managed by the Center for Distributed Learning, which provides leadership in distance learning policies, strategies and practices. The department collaborates with colleges to develop UCF's online programs and works with faculty and students to ensure successful course experiences.

Last fall, 26,000 UCF students enrolled in at least one online, blended or video course. UCF currently offers more than 2,500 online, video and blended classes.

To learn more about Next Generation Learning Challenges, visit http://nextgenlearning.org.

For more on UCF's Center for Distributed Learning, visit http://online.ucf.edu.

Knowledge Commons Update

Partly funded by the student technology fee, the library's Knowledge Commons opened in August 2010 and features more than 400 seats and 200 computers. In a recent survey, students expressed their opinions about the new space in the library.

"I love the new layout of the main floor," says a fourth-year business undergraduate. "The chairs are very comfortable, and the TV computers are great. I hope the rest of the library is updated!"

"I REALLY like the recent renovations to the library atmosphere," says a third-year education undergraduate. "There is so much more usable space, and it makes it a much more enjoyable and effective place to study."

"I love that there are a whole lot more computers to access as opposed to previous years, and on tables that we can spread out our books and notebooks so that we have room!" says a fifth-year health sciences undergraduate.

It sounds like the new Knowledge Commons is a hit among students. It's so popular, in fact, by about 11 a.m. on typical mornings, it's difficult, if not impossible, to find an open seat in the Commons.

In addition to these and many other positive survey responses, students also requested that the library have more of what is in the Commons — rolling whiteboards, more electrical outlets, more computers, more group areas with large monitors and better wireless connectivity.

In March, many attendees from the UCF Information Fluency Conference visited the Commons, as well as groups from Florida State University, the University of South Florida and Tallahassee Community College.

Also, May 6, UCF's Summer Conference for Faculty Development held its Faculty Showcase in the Commons. Attendees remarked that the space was warm and welcoming, and was more conducive to conversation and information sharing than space in previous showcases.

New Strategic Initiatives at the Center for Distributed Learning

Here are some of the latest initiatives in development at the Center for Distributed Learning (CDL):

IDL6543 Redesign

Although the IDL6543 program has been very successful at preparing faculty to develop and deliver online and blended courses, it has remained largely unchanged since its introduction in the mid 1990s. Based upon feedback received from deans, associate deans, department chairs and faculty, the Center for Distributed Learning decided to conduct an analysis of the program's current curriculum and delivery and determine what changes should be made.

During the Spring 2010, CDL formed a committee of faculty and administrators from across the university to drive the program analysis and provide recommendations for revision. The committee polled colleagues who had completed IDL6543, benchmarked alternative practices at other institutions both, and provided a set of recommendations to CDL.

Among the many recommendations included suggestions to place more of the curriculum online, expand the role of the Web Veterans, allow more flexibility to accommodate varying levels of technical competence, increase the enrollment cap, and focus less on pure pedagogy and more on how instructional design can be applied specifically in an online environment.

The curriculum is currently being revised and the pilot for the revision is targeted for Summer 2011 delivery.

Online Faculty Readiness Assessment

Based upon conversations with deans and department chairs, CDL understands that, increasingly, faculty are being hired with experience teaching online, thus prompting a question about whether or not they need to participate in IDL6543. However, because there are numerous models for teaching online, there is no clear definition of what "prior online teaching experience" means. UCF prides itself on developing the highest quality online courses (as evidenced by numerous awards) and must ensure that new faculty who are exempted from IDL6543 will meet the university's (and SACS's) expectations for quality design and delivery of online courses.

As a result of these requests, CDL developed an online form intended for selected faculty to demonstrate their experience, competence, familiarity with the Blackboard Vista platform, and teaching philosophy. According to a defined rubric, instructional designers will evaluate the submitted information and course design artifacts, resulting in one of the following outcomes: IDL6543 equivalency, a requirement to complete specific elements from IDL6543 or other programs (including technical instruction on the course management system), a requirement to complete a different professional development program, or a requirement to complete IDL6543 in its entirety. The time commitment from a faculty member to complete the instrument is not trivial — it expected to take several hours to prepare and submit. However, this is a fraction of the 80-hour time commitment required to complete IDL6543.

For more information, visit http://www.cdl.ucf.edu/ofra.

Faculty Seminars in Online Teaching

These are advanced topics "beyond IDL6543." They can be pedagogically oriented (e.g., how to facilitate groups in online courses, how to facilitate large online classes) or technology-oriented (e.g., integrating iTunes U, using Gradebook formulas).

The seminars will be workshop-based, available live or online, and short and flexible (we will come to colleges and departments to facilitate). They will be co-facilitated by a faculty member and a CDL instructional designer. Departments can choose from one of several pre-developed seminars or CDL can develop a custom program.

New Online Student Orientation

The current orientation within WebCourses is exclusively technical. The revision will also include expectations for online students, success strategies, video tips from fellow students, etc.

Learn 9.x Migration

A new course management system — Blackboard Learn — is coming within the next 18 months. Pilot courses in the new platform will begin during the 2011-2012 academic year.

WebCourses for All

With the new CMS, we hope to be able to provide a default WebCourses shell for all university courses, regardless of modality, that the faculty may elect to choose without a training requirement. However, certain features/tools may be unavailable until Essentials training is completed. The expectation is that this will replace myUCF Grades.

Mobility

Mobile Central and Mobile Learn (Blackboard products) are currently being deployed on a phased rollout. Mobile Central and Mobile Learn comprise a set of native apps for iPhone, Android, BlackBerry, and PalmOS smartphones.

Pedagogical Repository

The repository is a collection of effective online instructional practices, including a description, examples, scholarly references, etc. Faculty interested in working with CDL to contribute effective practices should contact Kelvin Thompson at kelvin@ucf.edu.

For more information about the Center for Distributed Learning, visit http://online.ucf.edu.

Knowledge Commons: By the Numbers

2
"consultation stations" in the Commons
(used by librarians for research consultations)

429
in-depth, one-on-one research consultations conducted by librarians in 2010
(a 23 percent increase from 2009)

2,800
hours the Research and Information Desk was open in 2010

205
consultations in the Commons done by the Writing Center in Spring 2011

26,034
questions librarians fielded
(a 15 percent increase from 2009)

Under Construction: Technology Commons

The Technology Commons, a technology fee-funded project to renovate the first floor of what is currently known as Computer Centers I and II is underway. This new undertaking aims to transform these areas into an interactive learning space that will draw UCF students.

The Technology Commons answers students' need for technology to support their academic work. Even students enrolled in face-to-face courses are often required to turn in assignments and complete tests online, or conduct online research or collaboration.

According to the UCF Center of Distributed Learning, during the fall 2010 semester more than 25,000 UCF students enrolled in at least one web- or video-based course. This is almost half of the total enrollment for the university.

The Technology Commons project is not a simple renovation of CCI and CCII. Rather, it is a total re-design of these spaces into collaborative study areas that will allow students to complete their academic work quickly and efficiently, but, at the same time, will be comfortable enough for longer periods of study.

Currently, the layout of CCI and CCII restricts students to individual workstations with limited space. The Technology Commons will have a more open, fluid layout ideal for group work that encourages and facilitates student interaction with their peers. Sections will also be set aside as quiet areas for individual study. By offering a diverse set of interconnected study

spaces, the Technology Commons will support students' differing study needs.

Features of the new Technology Commons include:

• **Cutting-edge technology** — More than 100 new computers and office electronics will be installed, and will be updated up with the latest software that students use for their courses. There will also be a video editing-podcast room, wireless print stations, and wired and wireless networks.

• **Seating** — There will be 214 seats (CCI: 54, CCII: 160), and the space will offer varying types of seating, from the more traditional individual workstations to booths, couches and outdoor patio seating. In addition, there will be collaboration rooms ideal for study groups, group projects and meetings.

• **Design and aesthetics** — The new space is designed to be aesthetically pleasing, modern, yet functional. It aspires to be an ideal work environment that inspires creativity while maximizing productivity. Its open layout is geared towards social interaction and encourages collaborative work.

A Hub in the Heart of Campus

Technology Commons will have everything that students need in one place: a café and "Refresh Bars" that offer refreshments, a technology product center, and a repair center to address technical problems and ensure that everything is working at all times. Located conveniently in the heart of campus, Technology Commons aims to be a useful resource center that students will frequent, a companion to the Library's Knowledge Commons, which already receives a high volume of traffic

When it is completed, the Technology Commons will be an exciting addition to the UCF campus.

information technologies & resources websites

Center for Distributed Learning **|** http://cdl.ucf.edu
Computer Services & Telecommunications **|** http://cst.ucf.edu
IT&R **|** http://itr.ucf.edu
Library **|** http://library.ucf.edu
Office of Instructional Resources **|** http://www.oir.ucf.edu