Description of the Planned Poster/Demonstration:

The poster demonstration, "Growing an Online Graduate Program," will demonstrate the process of initiating, planning, and implementing a successful online university degree. It will include a display of the program splash page, course syllabi and descriptions, faculty, and the documents used to plan   and implement the program.

The Problem:

The principal challenge to the flexibility of universities is the changing nature of the student body. Meeting this challenge requires more cost-effective methods of education and training. A steadily increasing proportion of university students are working adults who do not find attendance on campus to be a convenient way to learn. Lifelong learning describes the need for people to continue their education and training throughout their lives, as they face multiple careers and longer life spans than in the past.

Many universities, including Northern Arizona University (NAU), have reacted to this challenge by adding new programs and services. Graduate programs are many times offered as a heap--made up of a number of courses, and it does not matter how these courses are arranged. The Educational Technology faculty at the College of Education (COE) were concerned that these programs and services are based on a university as we've always known it in our lifetime, and that instead we should be creating new environments that are much different than what we've known.

For several years, professionals working in Arizona school districts as educational technology coordinators requested an M. Ed. in Educational Technology from Educational Technology faculty. These educators did not need degrees in elementary, secondary, or special education because they are or have been in-service teachers before assuming technology-related responsibilities. Additionally, requests for access to a graduate degree in educational technology from educators outside of Arizona had increased each year.

These concerns led us to propose a four-pronged system of professional development for in-service teachers seeking Technology Leader status:

   (a) professional development credits for Arizona teachers,
   (b)   Technology Leader Certification for Arizona teachers,
   (c) Master of Education in Educational Technology for Technology Leaders, and
   (d) a Web-based M. Ed. of Educational Technology program and a certification program for Technology Leaders anywhere in the world.

The first priority for COE was planning and implementing an M. Ed. in Educational Technology.

What Was Done:

No M. Ed. in Educational Technology was offered at Northern Arizona University. Planning Authority for an M. Ed. degree in Educational Technology was granted by the Arizona Board of Regents (ABOR) to the College of Education at NAU at the June 3, 1998, meeting. Discussion, planning, and reflection about this program had been ongoing among COE technology faculty since August 1997. Eight new courses with the prefix Educational Technology (ETC) were designed, created, and approved by COE and NAU. These eight courses were developed with the International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE) professional standards for Technology Leaders as guidelines. The initial course, Instructional Theory and Strategies in Technology Integration (ETC 547), was piloted as a Web-based course, ECI 599, during Summer Session II, 1998, with 13 students participating on and off campus.

Why the Work is Important:

Since its inception in fall 2000, the M. Ed. in Ed Tech program has grown from 50 accepted students to almost 400 in spring 2003. There are 4 tenured or tenure-track ed tech faculty, 2 expert clinical faculty, who were added in fall 2001. In fall 2002 the program piloted a "tier" instructional model in which a tenure-track faculty member oversees a clinical instructor, a program graduate, hired to teach 2-3 online classes. The new clinical faculty is at a distance, not on campus, as the original clinical faculty is. The program now serves students in Arizona, the United States, and around the world.