In this presentation we describe an ongoing partnership to illustrate how a small academic unit with limited financial and human resources has been able to develop a sustainable solution to meeting the information and communication technologies (ICT) needs of its learners and instructors. Campus Saint-Jean (CSJ) is a relatively small French-speaking faculty within one of the largest English-speaking universities in Canada, the University of Alberta. While CSJ strives to provide its students and personnel with as many services as possible in French, it remains a fact that many of the University’s services are available in English only. This state of affairs creates a challenge for many of our students and personnel in a number of areas, including that of ICT. Under the stewardship of its Technology Committee, CSJ has established a unique partnership with Extension Learning Solutions (xLS), a cost-recovery academic unit within the Faculty of Extension at the University of Alberta.

Since May 2005, CSJ and xLS have been involved in a joint partnership, the main goal of which is to leverage information and communications technology to improve the quality and quantity of distance delivered and/or technology enriched courses at CSJ. This involves two major areas of collaboration: instructional design and evaluation. In terms of instructional design, the partnership involves consultation and facilitation with professors and IT staff on course design, development and implementation for new courses and course innovations at CSJ that integrate videoconferencing and online course management systems. These individual initiatives also involve evaluation, with professors and support staff at CSJ and evaluators at xLS working together to develop appropriate tools and approaches. The information gained from the evaluation will help inform the process through supporting evidence-based decisions that will help participants understanding around what seems to be effective. Types of evaluation involved include needs assessments, usability tests, and formative and summative evaluations of course development projects. Both of these areas of partnership, which are conducted mainly in French, require careful attention to establishing and nurturing consistent and open communication about the project’s status, both between organizations and within CSJ itself. The emergence of a “partnership identity” has been both shaped ahead of time through memorandums of understanding, and has been adjusted to deal with changing circumstances. These issues and challenges have been documented as part of the reflective process of applied research. In our partnership then, being adaptable, addressing ambiguity, and thinking creatively have been central to our collaborative process.