Abstract: This session discusses best practices for project success. Two case studies will be presented. The first is our implementation of iTunes U, which was done without a budget. The second is our ongoing implementation of an ePortfolio, which will be live in September of 2008. Both of these cases illustrate the need for sponsorship and collaboration as well as sound project management in order to ensure a successful outcome.

Most projects require that a group of people from multiple areas of the institution must work together in a coordinated manner in order to produce the desired outcome. In addition to the basic tasks of project management required to organize the work, a successful project requires appropriate sponsorship and effective collaboration.

Active sponsorship at an appropriate level enables the team to focus on the project instead of competing objectives and is necessary to secure funding and resources. If you lack an appropriate sponsor, you will experience difficulties with time and budget commitments. If your project requires funding, especially for costs that will be paid to an entity outside of your institution, you must secure the support of the person who will approve the actual expenditure. Team members generally have many objectives to complete, often all of the same official importance. If they do not see evidence that your project is supported, they will focus on other objectives and your project will suffer.

Effective collaboration facilitates teamwork and helps the team overcome difficulties. When team members feel as though their work is denigrated, they will not put forth their best effort. Be sure to make friends with the IT staff. People that work in IT tend to be curious and truly enjoy looking at new technology. Many developers enjoy writing code – but not for people that antagonize them. All projects will have some kind of difficulty. If you have a good working relationship, people are more likely to solve any problems that arise instead of throwing up their hands and walking away.

Project management is essential for complicated projects or projects with many team members. The project manager needs to work with the team to ensure that all tasks are identified and given reasonable time estimates. Dependencies need to be documented to ensure that events occur in the necessary order and that each task will have the necessary input. Finally, progress needs to be tracked and team members need to be reminded of upcoming deadlines to ensure that work flows smoothly.
I will present 2 case studies that illustrate the points made above.