Towson University PT3 Mentoring to Master Technology Integration Project

Cheryl Wood, Towson University, Towson, Maryland, US
Patricia Ryan, Towson University, Towson, Maryland, US
William Sadera, Towson University, Towson, Maryland, US

There is little doubt about the ubiquitous nature of technology use in our culture. What has followed is a call to infuse technology within schools as an essential tool to enhance instruction and provide vivid, useful and creative learning experiences. A range of educational organizations such as the CEO Forum, SITE, ISTE, NCATE, and most content specialty associations recommend the use and infusion of technology within teacher preparation programs. Technology offers possibilities for solving “emerging” educational problems, but only if teachers are prepared to use the technology in support of student learning, thinking and problem solving. The Towson University teacher preparation program requires pre-service teacher candidates to become active participants in meeting this challenge. The purpose of this FY2002 PT3 Implementation project entitled, Mentoring to Master Technology Integration Project (MM-TIP), is to enhance teaching and learning through the increased use of technology within the University teacher education program and regional consortium. The University views the appropriate integration of technology as a vehicle to enhance learning and to change the nature of the learning community associated with the University. This mentoring project is centered around three major goals: first, to assist faculty in developing their own skills in using technology; second, to encourage faculty to utilize and integrate those technology skills into their teaching in effective and meaningful ways; and, finally, to model best practices in teaching with technology and to guide pre-service teacher candidates in incorporating technology into their own lesson planning and teaching.

The teacher education program extends across multiple colleges within the university framework, including faculty from the College of Education (COE) at Towson University, the Colleges of Liberal Arts (CLA), and Mathematics and Science (CMS) who teach pre-service teacher candidates in their classes. The members of the regional consortium are from several of the Professional Development Schools (PDS) Network associated with Towson University within two public school systems in the Baltimore area (Baltimore and Howard Counties), and faculty members at Harford Community College, a two-year institution which transfers a large number of teacher education candidates to Towson University each year. In addition, the Towson University Center for Instructional Advancement through Technology (CIAT) and the Center for Technology in Education (at Johns Hopkins University) serve as partners for this project.

The vehicle for infusing technology into teaching and learning in this project is a mentor-protégé staff development model with additional targeted staff development and on-going electronic communications. The keys to success in the FY2000 PT3 Capacity Building grant project were (a) the ongoing work and assistance of a mentor to help each faculty integrate technology into their teaching, (b) a supportive environment for collaboration and learning for each protégé, (c) all faculty involved as protégés were required to use technology in their teaching with a focus of student learning, and, (d) clear and specific rewards for integrating technology into teaching. As a result of that successful project, there is an improved system that supports faculty initiative and innovation with technology. Enthusiastic educators at Towson University and in the Professional Development Schools (PDS) K-12 classrooms are using technology on a regular basis for a variety of activities.

The results of the mentor-protégé model implemented in the FY2000 Capacity Building PT3 project serve as the motivation in extending the focus of that project beyond the original 20 University faculty and 8 PDS K-12 faculty to include the current eight consortium partners. In addition, we have expanded our faculty support efforts by providing an electronic learning community (ELC) for on-going discussion, sharing of best practices, and technical support for the consortium partners.

Our conference presentation will include an overview of the MM-TIP project including its goals and objectives, procedures for developing and monitoring the mentor/protégée partnerships, the framework for moving protégées from learning skills to modeling best practices, and the data collection and evaluation processes. In addition, we will share some of the projects that have been developed by faculty who participated as protégés in the project.