Grassroots Projects: Fostering and supporting an institute-wide culture of innovation

To maximize the use of technology to teach, learn and conduct research, instructors need the tools and time to innovate and participate in scholarly activities. To this aim, the British Columbia Institute of Technology has recently launched its 5-year Technology-Enabled Knowledge (TEK) Initiative. This session will focus on the processes in place to select, fund, support and showcase faculty-led “Grassroots Projects,” the motors that drive the TEK Initiative. Grassroots Projects are examples of creative, leading edge uses of educational technology to improve teaching, learning and collaboration at BCIT. All other efforts within the TEK Initiative aim to provide the infrastructure, resources and educational support to make these Grassroots Projects a success. Grassroots Projects are selected for funding by the TEK Faculty Advisory, which includes faculty representatives from each of the Institute’s six schools, as well as non-teaching faculty from applied research, the library, and the Learning and Teaching Centre. To qualify, the Grassroots projects are innovative, collaborative, and learner-centred. They also promote knowledge building, enable the learners to achieve learning outcomes, and support the TEK Initiative’s foundation goals.

Grassroots Project Leads are provided access to a wide range of technical and educational support structures to make their projects a success, including instructional development consultants, writers, editors, graphic artists, multimedia developers, and video producers. In return, Grassroots Project Leads are expected to provide feedback to the TEK team to inform a wider implementation of educational technologies and learning approaches, and showcase their projects and lessons learned to their colleagues in a variety of venues, including professional development days, newsletters, lunch and learns and webcasts. They are also encouraged to serve as TEK Champions within their departments by promoting the Initiative and working with their colleagues to foster future Grassroots projects. For BCIT, these Grassroots Projects serve two institute-wide functions: first, as pilot studies to test and inform further implementation of emerging technology and, second, as catalysts to foster a stronger culture of innovative teaching and learning with educational technology. As such, Grassroots Project Leads contribute their expertise and experience to the TEK Initiative as integral members in a participatory design process to help define the educational technology available to them, and as mentors to their colleagues to nurture future Grassroots projects.