Crossing the Digital Divide:
US—Ecuadorian Partnership to Develop Online University Courses

Casa Grande University is located in Guayaquil, Ecuador, a city of three and a half million people, the second-largest city in the nation. Online learning, however, is essentially non-existent in Guayaquil and the surrounding communities. At present, Casa Grande University is trying to meet the needs of area students by having faculty travel to outlying towns, but this is both inefficient and expensive. The University leadership also realizes that to be competitive in a global community, students must have experience and competency with technology.

Recently the University received funding to develop the first course in an international online program in city management, a step that they envision as being the first toward university-wide technology-supported instruction. To ensure that they were fully prepared in both faculty expertise and infrastructure, they arranged to have a Fulbright Senior Specialist consult onsite with faculty and staff during August and again in December, 2005.

This presentation documents the collaboration between the University and the non-Spanish speaking consultant from Texas. Many of the issues that will be discussed are directly related to the Digital Divide; for example, locating the appropriate resources in Spanish, staying within budget in an economy in which technology requires a disproportional share of resources, and planning for users in economically and technology challenged areas. Although the solutions we found will be discussed, attendees will be encouraged to share their own ideas with the group. The human factors of the collaboration will also be discussed; for example, how we formed a learning community among the faculty, staff, and visiting scholar. We will also discuss what we found to be the greatest needs among the faculty (pedagogy and confidence) and what changes were made in the planned faculty development to accommodate these needs.

Over a four-month period, the visiting scholar provided six weeks of onsite faculty development. During this time, eight university courses were restructured for web-based or web-supported delivery, the most extensive of which was a pilot course for Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) Certification Program. As much as time allows, these courses will be showcased, noting the special characteristics of each that meet the unique needs of area students. This discussion will include survey results demonstrating the attitudes, technology capabilities and experience, and confidence levels of prospective students in the TEFL Program, data that led to approval of a pilot course in TEFL Certification to be offered beginning in January, 2006.

Supporting websites:

- [Universidad Casa Grande](#)
- [Howard College](#)
- [Fulbright Senior Scholars Program](#)
- [Moodle](#)
- [Fulbright Ecuador](#)