

**A Professional Development Proposal
to Enhance My Knowledge and Use of Instructional Technology**

Submitted to:
Price Chair Small Grants Program
College of Food, Agricultural, and Environmental Sciences
The Ohio State University
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CFAES faculty member:

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Background

Many definitions of instructional technology can be found in the literature. Despite variations, most definitions converge on the notion that electronic communications technologies – electronic mail, the World Wide Web, bulletin board systems, etc. – allow trained instructors to create visual new learning environments that increase student interest and participation in the subject matter.

While these technologies have existed for some time, their adoption in higher education has been relatively slow and uneven. Many reasons can be cited for low rates of adoption. For instance, the new technologies must be accessible to faculty, and special training is required to use them properly. In addition, audio-visual and other course materials that are suitable for conventional classroom instruction must often be “converted” for use in a technology-enhanced course, and faculty must be willing to learn new teaching methods and techniques. These and other barriers can put off many instructors whose teaching could potentially be enhanced by use of instructional technologies. I was one of those instructors.

But, in the winter of 2005, I was planning a major revision of one of the courses I regularly teach, Agricultural Communication 367 (Agricultural Issues in Contemporary American Society). This five-hour course fulfills the university’s GEC social diversity and second-writing course requirement and typically attracts students from a variety of majors across campus. Given a recent declining enrollment and my general dissatisfaction with some of the course content, I wanted to re-orient the course so that it focused more on environmental and natural-resource themes, not just agricultural issues. In addition, I wanted the new course to introduce students to a variety of creative writing genres appropriate for expressing their views and perceptions about environmental issues. I met with a textbook representative and discovered a reasonably priced environmental reader for the class that contained essays illustrating excellent writing across all of these genres. I converted my syllabus to accommodate the new readings, developed new assignments and grading criteria, and looked forward to unveiling the revised class.

As I write this, four weeks into spring quarter, I am confident that the revised course is moving in the right direction, but at least one major element is still missing – students can only *read* about the environmental elements in the textbook, but they cannot see, hear or experience them.

This proposal outlines a plan for me to develop expertise in instructional technologies that will allow me to “bring” the environment to students enrolled in the class. Funding of the proposal will enable me to become a more effective teacher by using appropriate technology to engage students, increase their interaction in the class, and spark their curiosity by providing a more “visual” approach to the agricultural and environmental subject matter.

Description and Plan of Action

I request funding from the Price Chair Small Grants Program to help me learn how to design and add Web-based enhancements to several of my course lectures in Agr. Comm. 367. In addition to learning the key principles of instructional technology and instructional design, I would like training to help me increase student interest and interaction in environmental and writing topics.

One aspect of my professional development will take place by attending a national conference in June focused on the appropriate use of instructional technologies. I will be accompanied at the conference by Ken Kulka, Communications and Technology, who has agreed to collaborate with and train me in the planning and use of instructional technologies. During and after this conference, we will have an opportunity to discuss particular skills and techniques that will be most beneficial to my particular situation. Another professional development meeting for which I request funding is the 2005 annual convention of the Soil and Water Conservation Society. Information gained at this meeting will be used to deepen my knowledge of current environmental issues beyond Ohio.

Another phase of my professional development will begin summer quarter. With collaboration and support from C&T, I will travel to at least four sites in the state where we will acquire video footage that will be used to illustrate environmental problems and issues in my Agr. Comm. 367 class. The four sites – Paulding, Delaware, Hocking and Cuyahoga counties – were selected to illustrate key environmental issues related to air, land and water in the state. Paulding County is the site of large-scale livestock development that has been linked to air and water issues; Delaware County has been one of the fastest-growing counties in the U.S. in recent years due to urban sprawl; Hocking County is home to some of the state’s most beautiful and pristine natural features; and Cuyahoga County is located on Lake Erie, which has been the subject of national attention in recent years not only because of environmental problems, but also because of its reclamation.

The video shot from these sites will be edited and supporting graphics and audio added to support course lectures. The final video clips will then be made accessible to students via a new course Web site, which also will be developed with assistance from C&T. Portions of course lectures will be shot at the four sites, with the remainder being shot in C&T’s television studio. During this phase of the project, which will continue through Winter 2006, I will learn about instructional design from supervision of C&T professionals and my own readings. A portion of funding is requested to pay partial expenses incurred by C&T for their services and expertise, as well as to purchase educational videotapes, books and other resources for my self-instruction.

The final phase of the project will begin Spring Quarter 2006, when I offer the newly developed Web-enhanced version of Agr. Comm. 367. A minimum of four two-hour lectures will be prepared for Web-delivery. Students will be required to read two to three essays from the textbook in preparation for each lecture. They can then access the lecture via the class Web site and experience through streaming video the environmental footage that corresponds to the day's lesson. Additional Web site links will provide access to the day's writing assignment as well as an electronic bulletin board for class discussion. The bulletin board will be moderated by the course instructor and teaching assistant.

An advantage of linking my professional development activities to this particular course is that the class serves students from across the college and university. In addition to providing professional development for the instructor, the proposed course enhancements might well attract additional non-CFAES students to the class in future quarters. The enhancements will also allow for a more complete treatment of the CFAES Ecological Paradigm by providing visual support for the interactions between agriculture and the environment and between urban and rural.

The professional improvement activities proposed here can be completed in a one-year timeframe, as shown below. The budget for these activities is provided on the following page.

Timeline

Summer 2005

- Attend interactive learning workshop with Ken Kulka to increase knowledge of instructional technology methods and applications.
- Attend environmental conference to enhance familiarity with current environmental issues.
- Visit two in-state environmental sites to shoot video for Web delivery of course content.
- Begin shooting studio modules focusing on writing tips and techniques.

Autumn 2005

- Visit two in-state environmental sites to shoot video for Web delivery of course content.
- Complete shooting of studio modules focusing on writing tips and techniques.
- Begin to assemble and prepare course materials for Web delivery.

Winter 2006

- Finalize all course materials for Web delivery.

Spring 2006

- Offer pilot version of Agr. Comm. 367 in Web-enhanced format.
- Use student feedback from SEIs and qualitative evaluations to make adjustments in course content and delivery.
- Work with C&T to plan additional conversion of course lectures.

Budget

Activity	Dates	Amount
Attend summer conference: Rethinking the Classroom: Designs for Interaction East Lansing, MI	June 15-16	\$930.00 ^a
Attend annual conference: Soil and Water Conservation Society Rochester, NY	July 30 – Aug. 4	\$978.00 ^b
Video shoots at selected in-state sites ^c		
Paulding County (overnight)	Summer 2005	\$425.00
Cuyahoga County (overnight)	Summer 2005	\$610.00
Hocking County (overnight)	Autumn 2005	\$410.00
Delaware County (day shoot)	Autumn 2005	\$75.00
Total for video shoots		\$1,520.00
Communications and Technology Education Multimedia Services	Summer 2005 through Spring 2006	\$1,200.00
Educational resources	–	\$300.00
Total amount requested.....		\$4,928.00

^a Includes conference registration (\$300), rental car (\$162), and per diem for Tucker (\$234) and Kulka (\$234).

^b Includes conference registration (\$320), airline ticket (\$286), and per diem (\$372) for Tucker.

^c Includes rental car and per diem for Tucker and two C&T staff members for Paulding, Cuyahoga and Hocking County shoots; rental car only for Delaware County shoot.

I want to thank the Price Chair Committee for considering this proposal. I would welcome any feedback or advice its members may have on increasing my professional development in this area.
– *Mark Tucker*

Signatures

**Mark Tucker, Associate Professor
Agricultural Communication**

**Bob Birkenholz, Professor and Chair
Human and Community Resource Development**