

A change management proposal for the Freshman Seminars at UNCW

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## **Introduction**

Early in the spring semester of 2007 Amy Hathcock, Academic Advisor and Freshman Seminar Lead Contact at the University of North Carolina Wilmington (UNCW), began expressing concern over the lack of technology skills being taught in UNCW's Freshman Seminar courses. She would like to see Freshman Seminar at the very least introduced to Microsoft Word and Microsoft PowerPoint. Ms. Hathcock recently accepted this position at UNCW after working for a number of years with the Freshman Seminar program at Appalachian State University, a peer institution to UNCW. At Appalachian State technology is a major component in the Freshman Seminar programs and the results can be seen not only in basic and advanced level classes but also on the job market. Ms. Hathcock wants to bring these types of results and success stories to UNCW. She quickly brought these concerns to the MIT 530 team and a training needs assessment (TNA) was soon initiated.

The purpose of the TNA was to determine if and how much technology is being introduced and utilized, what technology is being utilized, and what types of technology the instructors would like to incorporate into the course but have been unable. To answer these questions, data was collected and analyzed from various sources to determine the causes and best solutions.

At the conclusion of the TNA one major solution was recommended: the development of a standardized Blackboard Vista shell. This shell would contain links to technology-based exercises and relevant technology-related content. Not only would this solution encourage proficiency with Microsoft Word and PowerPoint, but students would also gain technology skills associated with learning management systems and may be less apprehensive to take an online course in the future. Very brief training sessions will be offered to Freshman Seminar instructors orienting them to the standard Freshman Seminar course shell and instructing them how to successfully implement the activities.

After reviewing the MIT 530 team's recommendations Ms. Hathcock decided this was a viable solution that she would like to see implemented. To assist with this solutions implementation, this change management plan has been developed. This plan gives an overview of the implantation process and will define the stakeholders, timeline, required personnel, stages, and requested resources. This plan will be implemented over a period of three months beginning in April of 2007 and ending in the spring semester of 2008.

## **Summary of the change proposal**

This change proposal uses seven phases to reach the specified goal of increasing technology usage in the Freshman Seminar courses. Initially the project team must be formed. Next a Blackboard course with relevant technology related activities will be designed and developed. Involved in this process will be a course designer from the Office of e-Learning, a technology trainer from the department of Client Services, and a Freshman Seminar instructor. Next a one-to-one formative evaluation of the course will be conducted to identify any weaknesses in the Blackboard course design and based on these weaknesses revisions will be made. Workshops will then be held to train Freshman Seminar instructors on how to properly facilitate the Blackboard courses and technology-related activities. This step will require the assistance of a trainer from the Office of e-Learning. The sixth phase, full implementation, will occur after all instructors have been trained on the Blackboard Vista course and feel comfortable using it as a component in their Freshman Seminar courses. The final phase, summative evaluation will help the Freshman Seminar Lead contact to determine if this is a viable solution to the problem and should be sustained. If, based on the data collected during the summative evaluation, it is determined this solution is not working, another solution and change management plan will be developed and implemented.

## **Identification of Stakeholders**

Identifying appropriate stakeholders are an important step in any change management plan. This plan is no different and great care has been taken in identifying stakeholders. Amy Hathcock, the Freshman Seminar Lead Contact, initiated the TNA and is very receptive to the change management plan. She has resources at her disposal and knows who to contact for more. Successful implementation of the Change Management Plan would be a success for her in her supervisory role. The MIT 530 team serves as the change agent, identifying the problems or gaps, suggesting a solution, and the best way to manage the solution. The MIT 530 team may act as consultants during the implementation of the plan but will not implement the change. Freshman Seminar instructors are also major stakeholders as they will be directly involved with the change. Some instructors recognize the value of technology, are tech-savvy, and look forward to incorporating more technology into their course while others are the exact opposite. For this plan to be successful those instructors with varying philosophies and strengths needs to be encouraged to learn and work collaboratively. The Office of e-Learning at UNCW will also need to be involved. Their personnel's expertise will be called upon to design and develop an effective online course shell as well as deliver the Blackboard Vista training. Finally, students will be major stakeholders in this process. They are the ones who the change plan is meant to affect by increasing their technology knowledge and skills. To receive student buy-in the instructors must first see the value in teaching technology skills.

## **Forces for and against innovation**

During the TNA a number of change management challenges were revealed. Many instructors would like to incorporate more technology into their courses but feel they do not have the time to redesign their course. An additional faction of instructors had little or no technology skills themselves and thus had found it difficult to teach skills they did not have to their students. Hopefully by giving these instructors a ready-made course and offering training and one-on-one drop-in hours their “lack of time” attitude and fears will be abated.

An additional challenge is the availability of “smart” classrooms on campus. Because the Freshman Seminar program is not an academic department they are the last to be scheduled for classrooms. A number of instructors complained that they have been unable to incorporate technology into their lessons in the past because their classrooms did not have a presentation computer.

The good news is that the majority of Freshman Seminar instructors surveyed for the TNA were very receptive to the idea of incorporating more technology into their courses and used technology on a regular basis in their day-to-day jobs. These instructors will be very helpful in convincing the others that this change is a good idea and won’t be as hard as they may have thought.

## **The change management team**

The initial step in the implementation of this change management plan is the establishment of a change management team. This team will be responsible for keeping the plan on track, measuring the plan’s success, and promoting the value of the plan to the stakeholders. Team members must maintain a positive demeanor and stay enthusiastic for the plan to be a success.

The team will be formed at the end of April 2007 and will stay together until the conclusion of the project. They will meet initially the end of April to review the plan and raise any concerns they may have before beginning the project. The team will be formed immediately as the goal of full implementation in fall of 2007 is quickly approaching.

Members of the team will include Amy Hathcock, the Freshman Seminar Lead Contact, three Freshman Seminar instructors, and the ITSD student liaison. Ms. Hathcock is an obvious choice for the leader of the change management team as she supervises all Freshman Seminar courses. The three instructors will be selected primarily according to their attitude towards technology but also their availability and commitment to the change. The ITSD student liaison will be included to ensure communication between ITSD and the Freshman Seminar program. The individual currently in this position also happens to teach a Freshman Seminar in the fall so she will be a great asset to the team and bring experiences from a number of perspectives.

Ms. Hathcock will be responsible for acquiring resource commitments from the Office of e-Learning. Not only will she need to acquire that office's help and time in designing the Blackboard Vista course, but also to provide the training to faculty on the facilitation of a Blackboard Vista course. Another challenge will be the availability of "Smart" classrooms. One solution to this dilemma would involve the scheduling of a computer lab in the first week or two of the course so the instructor could demonstrate how to login to the course and troubleshoot any student issues. Then the class could move back to their original room and the students would complete their web-based assignments on their own time as a form of homework.

## **Phases of Implementation and Timeline**

### **Phase I: Change Management Team Members Identified and Formed (April 20-27, 2007)**

Primary Objective: Select change management team members from a list of stakeholders.

This initial phase will set the tone for the rest of the project. Change management team members will be selected from the Freshman Seminar instructor pool. Members of the team will include Amy Hathcock, the Freshman Seminar Lead Contact, three Freshman Seminar instructors, and the ITSD student liaison.

### **Phase II: Course Design (May 1-15 2007)**

Primary Objective: Design web-based course incorporating Microsoft Word and Microsoft PowerPoint skills.

The second phase will include the design of an interactive web-based course. Activities that require learners to perform various tasks using Microsoft Word, and Microsoft PowerPoint will be designed. Activities will be project-based to maintain authenticity and motivation. A design document will be produced during this phase that will provide the structure and theory for course development. A course designer from the Office of e-Learning will work closely with a UNCW technology trainer and Freshman Seminar instructor, acting in the role of a subject-matter expert, to design the course.

### **Phase III: Course Development (May 16-31 2007)**

Primary Objective: Develop the web-based course based on the design document produced during Phase I.

The third phase of the change proposal will involve the development of the Blackboard Vista course. Any necessary graphics, interactive Flash games, or modules will be produced. A student tutorial and instructor's guide will be produced. The student tutorial will be developed using Camtasia or Captivate and will walk a student through the course, explain the navigation scheme, and proper instructional order of the modules. The instructor's guide will direct the instructor through the facilitation of the shell and provide tips for proper utilization.

### **Phase IV: Formative Evaluation (June 1-15, 2007)**

Primary Objective: Improve the quality of the course by identifying weaknesses through pilot testing

The fourth phase will involve a one-to-one formative evaluation of the course. A select number of incoming students will be invited to participate. The formative evaluation will be conducted by an MIT student intern working under the supervision of the Freshman Seminar Lead Contact and an MIT faculty member. Each student will be given a brief introduction by a Freshman Seminar instructor reading from a script, as if they were in a Freshman Seminar class, and given the assignment of completing a number of technology-based activities in the Blackboard Vista course on their own time. The course will be evaluated for technical issues as well as instructional soundness. The evaluation results will then be used to revise the course.

#### **Phase V. Training on Blackboard Vista LMS (June 16-July 31, 2007)**

Primary Objective: Orient Freshman Seminar instructors with the Blackboard Vista LMS so they will feel comfortable facilitating the standard course.

The fifth phase will involve a series of training and drop-in sessions for Freshman Seminar instructors on how to facilitate a course using the Blackboard Vista LMS. These workshops have already been developed by the UNCW Office of e-Learning and will ease many of the instructor's technology-related trepidation.

#### **Phase VI. Full Implementation (Fall Semester 2007)**

Primary Objective: Release the Blackboard Vista shell and instructor's guide to all Freshman Seminar instructors.

Come the fall of 2007, all instructors should feel comfortable facilitating a course using Blackboard Vista and a few may choose to use additional tools within Vista (e-mail, online chat, discussion boards, digital drop box, etc.). Additional support will be offered in the form of drop-in hours at the Office of e-Learning and an e-mail listserv for questions any instructors may have regarding the Blackboard Vista course.

#### **Phase VII. Summative Evaluation (Spring Semester 2008)**

Primary Objective: Determine if the Blackboard Vista shell is a viable solution to the initial problem and if the solution should be continued.

A summative evaluation will be conducted to determine if the proposed change is a viable solution or if another solution should be implemented. The summative evaluation will be conducted by an unpaid intern from the MIT program at UNCW.

## Identification of key people

Names	Role in Innovation	Resources/Constraint
Amy Hathcock	Leader	Resource: Has ready access to resources and the power to alter the existing system
MIT 530 Team	Change Agent	Resource: Devised the plan after a thorough analysis of the system
Most Faculty (See the value to incorporating technology into Freshman Seminars)	Mainstreamers	Resource: When given the opportunity these instructors will be happy to change their behavior and increase the technology usage in their classes. They will model behavior and encourage laggards to adopt the innovation.
Few Faculty (Don't see the value in incorporating technology into Freshman Seminars)	Unwilling Laggards	Constraint: Because they don't value technology and use technology on a regular basis they will be resistant to the innovation

## Pros and Cons

One of the major benefits of this change management plan is that it requires a very small time commitment from the instructors. They must attend a brief workshop and are given a shell full of activities they can use to teach technology skills to their students. Instead of requiring attendance at a series of workshops to learn how to design, develop, and implement a course, instructors are only required to attend a workshop covering the facilitation of a course.

One of the challenges of this change management plan may be the brief timeline. However, the timeline is definitely feasible because the instructors are not required to build the courses themselves.



## Appendices

### Appendix A-Stages of Implementation

**Stage 0** -- The Freshman Seminar Lead Contact indicated concern over the amount of technology concerning and would like assistance identifying a solution

**Stage 1** – Define the system and establish a relationship with the client

**Stage 2** -- Establish the problem using a training needs assessment

**Stage 3** – Assess available resources that are available to help solve the problem

**Stage 4** – Select the most feasible solution

**Stage 5** – Implement the solutions

**Stage 6** – Evaluate the change and revise as necessary

### Appendix B –Current and Desired Performances

**Current Performance Conditions:** Few instructors are integrating technology into their Freshman Seminar courses.

**Desired Performance Conditions:** Freshman Seminar instructors will introduce students to Microsoft Word and Microsoft PowerPoint and in turn give the students the technology skills they need to complete quality work in future classes and find a job after graduation.

### Appendix C –Timeline

Goals	Indicators	Benchmarks	Measures
Phase I	The change management team will be formed	A list of change management team members	Team member list
Phase II	A course designer with input from the change management team will design a course shell	The design document will be reviewed by change management team members	A design document
Phase III	A course developer with input from the change management team will develop a course shell following the	A completed Blackboard Vista course shell with activities inserted	A Blackboard Vista course shell loaded with content

	guidelines stated in the design document.		
Phase IV	Students will have a script read to them and then will be asked to complete a number of activities in a Blackboard Vista course	Students will be observed and asked to fill out a survey after completing the activities	Observation notes and surveys from students
Phase V	Freshman Seminar instructors will be asked to participate in a brief workshop that will introduce them to the basics of facilitating a Blackboard Vista course	Instructors will be given surveys which ask them questions about facilitating a course in Blackboard Vista.	Survey results from instructors.
Phase VI	All Freshman Seminar instructors will use the standardized Blackboard Vista shell to teach technology skills to their students	Freshman Seminar instructors will use the course shell to incorporate technology into their courses.	Syllabi for the Freshmen Seminar Courses
Phase VII	Summative Evaluation	Surveys, interviews, and other forms of data collection will be used to determine the success of the change management plan.	Data collection from surveys, interviews, extant data analysis, etc.