



MIT 530: Evaluation and Change in Instructional Development

Needs Assessment Plan

HOW to effectively support online course teaching with the faculty
Online Teaching Success Problem

Submitted by

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Introduction

The most significant contribution the Internet makes is to revolutionize the way human beings learn. E-Learning is the right product for responding to the tendency of human beings to need access to education anytime and anywhere. With its convenience and popularity among learners, online learning has become a new avenue for course delivery and the new arena for higher educational institutions to compete for students' enrollment and course participation.

To keep competitive and meet the increasing needs of every participant keeping himself current, UNCW initiated online course delivery program with WebCT CE in Summer II, 2003, and set up a special e-learning office to support online course delivery across the campus. The Office of e-Learning has two professionals dedicated to online learning and support for faculty teaching online courses.

Since 2003, the number of fully online courses and blended courses has ascended quickly from 50 to 169 in Spring 2007, three times the original number. The academic programs WebCT covers are growing, up to 18 programs throughout the university. As for statistics, for Fall 2006 there were a total of 2,010 courses offered to students, which accounted for a total of 39,437 student seats filled at UNCW. Of the courses being offered, there were 98 courses designated as fully online with 1,371 seats registered and 57 designated as online with class meetings with 1112 seats registered for a total of 145 courses and 2,483 seats. For Spring 2007, there are a total of 169 courses offered that are designated as either on-line or blended with a total of 3,796 seats.

Problem Description

The Office of e-Learning falls under client services (see **appendix A**). Its mission (See **appendix B**) is to provide learning-on-demand opportunities in a web-based format for students, faculty, and staff at UNCW. The two professionals working in the office are mainly in charge of providing instructional training and support for faculty teaching online courses, including technical support, troubleshooting requests, and quality support around teaching online courses.

According to one Office of e-Learning staff member working full time, the majority of support requests from faculty teaching online courses are those requests pertaining to how to design, how to deliver, or how to manage via WebCT, although some training for such is provided. The Office of e-Learning staff feels that, with the support requests piled on top of their regular daily demands, their workload is very overwhelming and they are not able to meet all of the duties which are required of them.

With the complete implementation of WebCT Vista throughout the university by Fall 2007, and with more programs and more courses requested to be offered via WebCT Vista, not to mention with one server shared with other four universities, there will be more and more relevant instructional training and support for faculty teaching online courses as well as troubleshooting requests expected. According to the Office of e-Learning, there will not be new staff hired there. With the growing challenges, the main concern of the office of e-Learning is how to effectively help faculty successfully with transition from WebCT CE to WebCT Vista, as well as successfully teach online courses.

Purpose of Needs Assessment

The purpose of the needs assessment is to find out the requirements of knowledge, skill, and attitudes from faculty as they relate to teaching online, as well as relevant system technology requirements to identify optimal levels of support. The needs assessment will also determine where are support gaps in each of the areas listed above and what kind of support is most needed, and how resources of time should be allocated and what level of importance should be delegated to each. The final purpose of the needs assessment is to uncover and identify needs which have not been uncovered to help ensure a smoother transition from one system to the other. Possible causes will be identified and possible solutions for supporting faculty to teach online courses successfully will be recommended through various data collection methods.

Models

Two different models will be used during the training needs assessment: Rossett's Training Needs Assessment (TNA) Model, and Mager and Pipe's Performance Analysis Model (1970) (see Appendix C).

The model which will be used as the guideline for planning and conducting the needs assessment is Rossett's TNA Model. The purpose of Rossett's TNA is to gather information regarding optimal, actual, feelings, causes, and solutions. Using Rossett's stage planner method, our group will gather the necessary information for the needs assessment within four different stages:

- Stage one – needs assessment – gather information on optimal, actual, feelings, causes, and solutions via a meeting with the SME, Patsy McQuiston, in the Office of e-Learning.
- Stage two – extant data – gather optimal and actual by analyzing remedy tickets, job requests, and telephone troubleshooting records, as well as analyzing a faculty survey which has already been administered by the Office of e-Learning.
- Stage three – needs assessment – deliver a survey questionnaire to the UNCW faculty who are currently teaching online courses and gather information on knowledge, attitude, and skill.
- Stage four – needs assessment – if, after administering and analyzing the survey, it is determined that more in depth information is needed, interviews with a sample of those who completed the survey will be conducted to retrieve more on knowledge, attitude, and skill.

Mager and Pipe's Performance Analysis Model (1970) demonstrates an extremely effective method of dealing with human performance issues, the solutions for which may or may not be related to training. Mager and Pipe's Performance Analysis Model is basically a series of yes or no questions presented in the form of a decision tree or flow chart.

The Mager and Pipe model will be useful in guiding the development of the data collection instrument (the faculty survey). Since it deals with performance discrepancy at the job/performer level of performance, the yes/no questions presented in the model will serve as a guide for developing the questions which will populate the faculty survey.

Data Collection

In order to find out what is going on with and what should be going on with faculty teaching course via WebCT (CE and Vista), we will use two data collection techniques related: extant data analysis and needs assessment along with the project. Extant data analysis is intended to collect data on optimal and actual; needs assessment aims at collecting data deeply and broadly on optimal, actual, feeling, as well as some possible causes and solutions.

There will be four stages in the TNA plan, which will go throughout needs assessment report. Following initial interviews for preliminary data on the problem and the context, more detailed data will be gathered according to the TNA planner below:

Table 1.

TNA Planner Purposes		
Description	Status	Sources
Optimal	Need	Extant data, faculty instructional supporter and graduate assistant in the office of e-learning
Actual	Have some, need more	Extant data, faculty instructional supporter and graduate assistant in the office

		of e-learning
Feeling	Have some	Faculty instructional supporter and graduate assistant in the office of e-learning
Causes	Have some, need more	Faculty, Faculty instructional supporter and graduate assistant in the office of e-learning
Solution	Need	Faculty, Faculty instructional supporter and graduate assistant in the office of e-learning

Table 2.

TNA Planner Techniques and Tools		
Stage	Technique	Tools and Sources
1	Needs Assessment	Interview group meeting with faculty instructional supporter in the office of e-learning (Actuals and Optimals)
2	Extant data	Analyze records of job requests and telephone troubleshooting on online course teaching from faculty. (Actuals and Optimals)
3	Needs Assessment	Survey – to determine that what kind of supports for faculty teaching online courses are needed and feelings and knowledge/skills of faculty regard to using WebCT and WebVista; (possible causes of problem, Feelings, and Actuals)
4	Needs Assessment	Interview of selected faculty after results of surveys in it is determined that more information on support successful online course teaching with faculty is needed.

TNA Stage Planner

STAGE 1

1. Subject of TNA:

How to effectively support faculty teaching online course successfully

2. Summary of what you already know about the subject:

- **Just one full-time staff and three part-time staff (one staff and two graduate assistants) working in the office of e-learning**
- **There are increasing troubleshooting from faculty teaching online course**
- **The staff in the office of e-learning is concerned about effective support for faculty teaching online course and want to improve effective support for faculty's success on teaching online course**
- **There is no specific procedure/process for faculty teaching online course using WebCT**

- **Some faculty is short of relevant knowledge and skills although some training is provided.**
3. Summary of Information being sought during this stage:
 - **What kind of support the faculty is most requested**
 - **What knowledge and skills related the faculty is lack**
 - **The optimal status of support for faculty teaching online course**
 - **The possible causes of faculty requesting support for online course teaching**
 4. Who or What are the sources of information for this stage?
SME – e-learning staff
 5. What TNA Tool(s) will be used to carry out this stage?
Interview, Group meeting
 6. If you will be interviewing or surveying, what questions will you ask? If you will be observing, what will you be watching? If you will be using a group meeting what is your agenda
 - **Survey questions focus on the current and desired status of support provided to faculty, the current knowledge/skills of and attitude towards online course teaching of the faculty**
 - **Meeting with e-learning staff separately in the beginning of TNA plan, before starting survey and after completing survey, and after receiving the results of survey, and then after analysis of survey.**

STAGE 2

1. Subject of TNA
How to effectively support faculty teaching online course successfully
2. Summary of what you already know about the subject:
Minimal information about the e-learning department
3. Summary of Information being sought during this stage:
To find out the greatest need area from faculty.
4. Who or What are the sources of information for this stage?
Faculty
5. What TNA Tool(s) will be used to carry out this stage?
Survey
6. If you will be interviewing or surveying, what questions will you ask? If you will be observing, what will you be watching? If you will be using a group meeting what is your agenda.
The questions in the survey will be directed to ask “What is needed” in areas of training and support.

STAGE 3

1. Subject of TNA: **How to effectively support faculty teaching online course successfully**
2. Summary of what you already know about the subject:
Minimal information about the e-learning department
3. Summary of Information being sought during this stage:
If further information is needed after collecting survey results
4. Who or What are the sources of information for this stage?
Faculty
5. What TNA Tool(s) will be used to carry out this stage?
Interview

6. If you will be interviewing or surveying, what questions will you ask? If you will be observing, what will you be watching? If you will be using a group meeting what is your agenda
The questions will be formulated based on the results of the survey.

Time Line

Week of February 26, 2007	Online Surveys developed.
March 12, 2007	Online Surveys delivered to faculty. Faculty will have until March 16, 2007 to complete.
March 19, 2007	Comparative research completed and analyzed.
March 16, 2007	Surveys completed and analyzed.
March 20, 2007	Interviews conducted.
March 22, 2007	Report Completed.

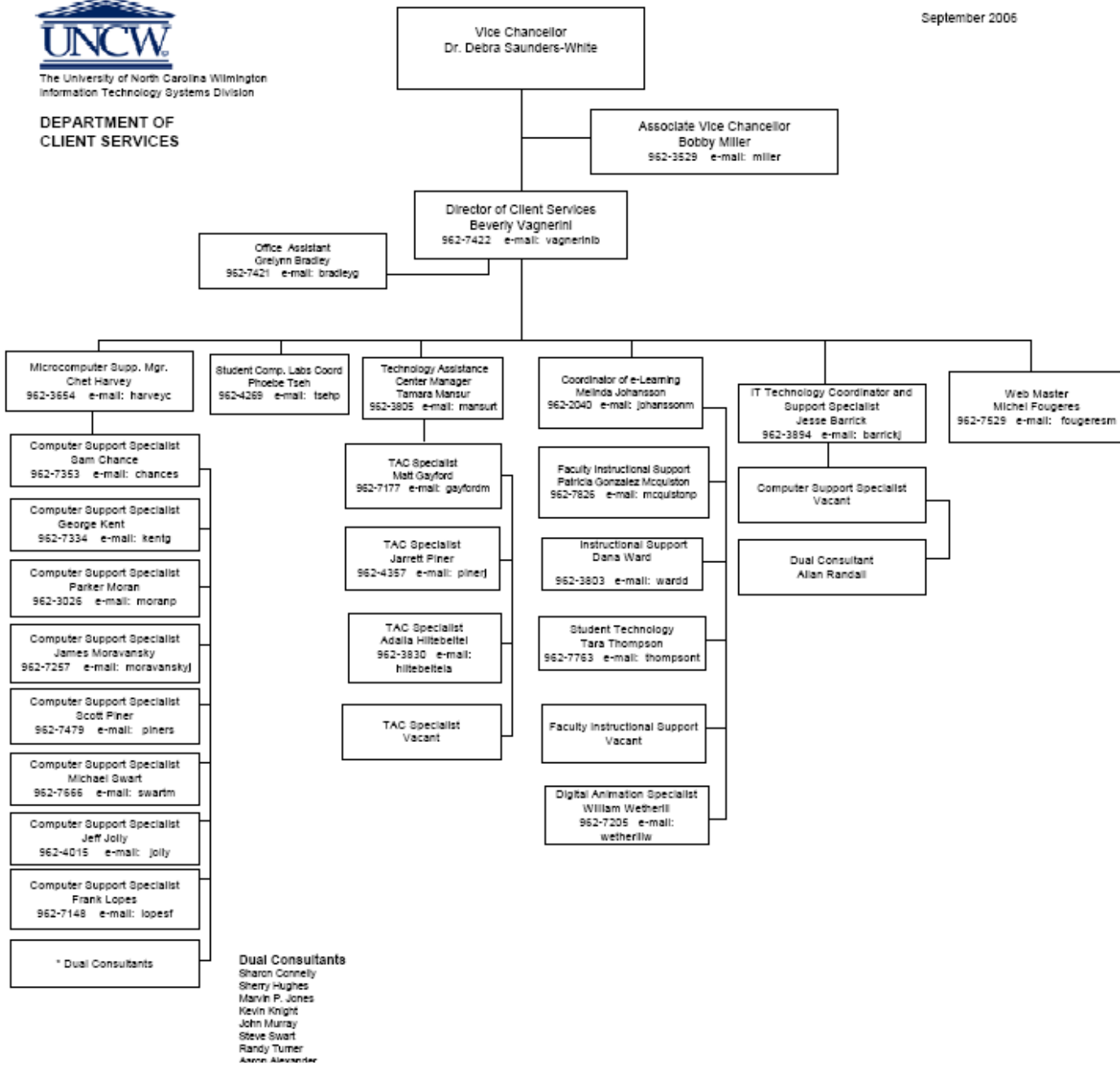
Appendix A



The University of North Carolina Wilmington
Information Technology Systems Division

DEPARTMENT OF CLIENT SERVICES

September 2006



Appendix B

The Information Technology Systems Division Mission Statement

The Information Technology Systems Division is an innovative organization committed to providing a technologically progressive environment for students, faculty and staff.

We are dedicated:

--to lead

--to collaborate

--to support

with cost effective services that promote the mission of our university.

Merging technology and instruction

The mission of e-Learning Technologies is to provide instructional support and assistance to faculty and students using current and emerging technologies to enhance and/or expand course content and delivery. To achieve this mission we collaborate with general technology trainers, the Technology Assistance Center staff, the Center for Teaching Excellence and departmental technology liaisons across campus.

Appendix C

Performance Analysis Model
Mager & Pipe (1970)

