# NISOD INNOVATION ABSTRACTS

## AN ACADEMIC APPROACH TO REDESIGNING FACULTY PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

San Jacinto College (SJC) began requiring a faculty certification course to teach online and hybrid courses in spring 2006. This initial course focused on general instructional theory and training for the learning management system and supporting tools. This format of the certification was required through March 2010. During this period, 486 individuals were certified to teach online and hybrid courses at SJC. The model, described below, was identified as a new requirement for faculty beginning April 2010. All faculty members will complete the course prior to teaching online or hybrid classes. Faculty previously certified by SJC have been given a two-year window to become certified in ACAdemic.

In fall 2008, we recognized the need to develop professional development opportunities—e.g., which provided faculty with more content on the pedagogy of teaching online. Planning and development discussions were focused on keeping learning active, collaborative, and authentic--or what was later to become the "ACA" in ACAdemic. Over the course of the next year, the Instructional Design team developed the content; and in spring 2010, SJC completed the pilot of a new faculty certification program titled ACAdemic Learning.

This eight-week professional development course has become the new standard at SJC for faculty certification to teach online and hybrid courses. The ACAdemic series provides faculty a basic background of best practices in educational design principles and teaching methods, including effective content design and delivery, learning environment design, alternative methods of assessments, effective integration of technology resources, and other relevant pedagogical content. ACAdemic presents content in a multi-layered approach, offering participants opportunities to explore concepts through active, collaborative, and authentic activities.

Each section of ACAdemic Learning is facilitated by Instructional Designers in a hybrid format which includes one mandatory synchronous group discussion, ideally occurring in a face-to-face session; however, audio bridge, virtual classroom, or other synchronous formats are viable options, as well.

ACAdemic Learning consists of seven modules to be completed over an eight-week period. With the exception of *Assessment*, each module takes place over a one-week period. The *Assessment* module is designed for two weeks.

### Orientation

Orientation provides an overview of the ACAdemic Learning Technologies and models different strategies for supporting the orientation of learners in a technology-mediated learning environment.

### ACAdemic Framework for Effective Instruction

Framework for Effective Instruction explores characteristics of quality instruction, identifies elements common to quality teaching and learning, considers those elements within the context of case examples, and explores the application of those concepts to course activities designed previously.

### Leveraging and Creating Internet Resources

Leveraging and Creating Resources explores how to locate and leverage a broad range of existing instructional content and applications that may be used by faculty or learners to generate instructional resources or products. Issues related to the use of digital content, including usability, accessibility and copyright, are discussed.

### Assessment

Assessment explores varied instructional assessment strategies and pedagogy surrounding the development, alignment, and implementation in active, collaborative, and authentic instruction.

### Communication

Communication focuses on pedagogy surrounding the use of discussion boards and voice boards for learning. Crafting optimal discussion prompts, effective faculty facilitation of online discussions, non-faculty facilitation strategies, and strategies for faculty and peer assessment of discussion participation are addressed.

## ACAdemic Lessons

ACAdemic Lessons applies the active, collaborative, and authentic framework to the development of learning activities. An approach for the design and development of instructional content is explored in combination with theory and best practices for the sequencing of instructional events.

## Managing a Course

Managing a Course focuses on the organization of a course site and the management of classroom activities occurring throughout a semester. Approaches to organizing a course site to facilitate use by learners are addressed; and a variety of learning management system tools, with recommendations for effective uses, are described.

The first full session of ACAdemic was opened to faculty registration on April 12. At the end of fall 2010 semester, nearly 100 faculty members completed the program, with 10 additional sections scheduled for spring and summer 2011 semesters. Plans are to schedule and facilitate 15 sections, potentially serving 225 faculty members, each academic year.

Faculty previously certified to teach distance learning will have until August 31, 2012, to complete the ACAdemic certification to continue teaching courses in these delivery formats. Technical training for the college's LMS and other software products continues to be available through the Educational Technology Training and Professional Development Department.

The ACAdemic Learning program is reviewed regularly and feedback sought in an effort to provide meaningful, quality professional development programs for SJC faculty. In addition, opportunities to apply for grants, to partner with other institutions, and to conduct related research are being explored.

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