

Hofstra University

Center for Teaching Excellence

**Evaluation of the Multimedia
Instructional Technology Pioneer Initiative**

Fall 1999 – Spring 2000

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Introduction

This report documents the results from an evaluation of the Multimedia Instructional Technology Initiative (i.e., Pioneer Program) based on feedback provided by Pioneer Faculty, Instructional Technology Assistants (ITAs), and Students during the Fall 1999 and Spring 2000 Semesters. Included in this report are summaries of the comments provided for each evaluation question (see Appendix A for the complete set of Faculty, ITA, and Student evaluation questions).

Since its inception in 1997, the Pioneer Program has been well received. The program started with an initial group of 14 Faculty members and as of the Spring 2000 semester it had grown to 23 members. The program has also expanded with respect to the diversity of technology applications Faculty members have incorporated into their courses. Currently, Pioneer Faculty are teaching courses representing the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, the New College, the Frank G. Zarb School of Business, the School of Communication, and the School of Education and Allied Human Services, with levels ranging from Freshman to Graduate. The goal of the program is to enhance teaching and learning processes through collaboration and the qualitative application of multimedia-based technologies.

To maintain the momentum of the program, improve its effectiveness, and maximize the manner in which specific Faculty member and Student needs are being met, a feedback survey was administered at the end of the Fall 1999 and Spring 2000 semesters to Faculty, ITAs, and Students participating in the program. Faculty members were asked to provide their feedback by responding to a paper and pencil evaluation form or completing an electronic version of the form at the Center for Teaching Excellence web site. The Student Survey was administered via a paper and pencil form which was distributed at the end of the course by the Pioneer Faculty. The ITA Survey was administered electronically to the ITAs through email. This procedure was consistent with the evaluation process for the Pioneer program established in the Spring 1997 (CTE Report No. 2, November 1997).

1.02 SUMMARY RESULTS

The following is a summary of Faculty, ITA, and Student responses aggregated for each question.

2.1 Faculty Feedback

Faculty were asked the following questions regarding their experience as a Pioneer: (1) How did you integrate technology into the class? (2) How did the integration of technology fit in with the goals and objectives you had for the class? (3) Strengths of the class (4) Computer lab environment (5) Instructional teaching assistants (6) Problems that arose (7) Suggestions for improvement (8) Additional Comments. A summary of the comments follow with illustrative examples.

(1) How did you integrate technology into the class?

Pioneer Faculty incorporated a variety of educational technology into their courses. A large majority reported using e-mail to support homework, exam, and term paper submission, as well as to enhance Student/Pioneer interaction. Many Pioneers indicated course syllabi, lecture notes and outlines, and old homework assignments were posted on course web pages, making Internet usage a requirement for the class. Several Pioneers had students evaluate web sites

relevant to the course as part of their class assignments. Email was said to aid class interactions greatly, and was used for homework submissions as well as communication between Pioneers and students. Many Pioneers reported using PowerPoint (with a proxima) to present lesson material, which allowed for the inclusion of color photos, animations and video clips. Other software programs that were integrated included Eshare, Minitab, and SPSS, as well as Multimedia tools, including Dreamweaver, PhotoShop, GIF Animates, Ulead, Director, and Visual Basic. Computer labs were used to expand exposure to various types of technology and to provide students an interactive learning experience.

(2) How did the integration of technology fit in with the goals and objectives you had for the class?

Faculty members had favorable reactions regarding how technology was integrated into their classes, and expressed a positive impact on course goals and objectives. Many mentioned the assistance technology provided helping Students to understand important concepts by enabling illustrations, animations and video presentations. Students were reported to have benefited from the access to information and feedback from both Professors and peers (e.g., Eshare and or email). For example, the technology used provided Students with instant access to pertinent information, either from the Professor, peers, publications or websites, and gave Students the opportunity to create technology-based applications (e.g., web pages, new analyses).

(3) Strengths of the class

Several Faculty cited greater Student enthusiasm for learning as a benefit resulting from incorporating educational technology into their courses. The application of technology was cited as challenging and rewarding, and Faculty related that this course aspect helped deepen the knowledge of the Students. Software and Internet applications were reported to provide the Students with an in depth perspective on course material (e.g., better visuals and greater breadth of information) that improved their understanding of important concepts. Additional information readily available on-line supplemented course materials. Overall communication between Faculty and Students, as well as Students amongst themselves, was reported to have increased using Eshare and e-mail.

(4) Computer lab environment

Faculty commented on several of the different computer labs, specifically Dionne, Weller, BDC, Gallon and Calkins. Several of the Faculty cited the positive teaching and learning environment fostered by the computer labs. Gallon lab received the most positive feedback. In general, all Faculty provided less than satisfactory evaluations of the reliability of educational technology, both hardware and software, in the other labs. Problems were reported for servers, projectors (e.g., proxima) for presentations, and networked software applications. The need to upgrade outdated equipment was suggested by some Faculty. Several Faculty reported increased effectiveness with smaller class sizes in the lab setting. One Faculty cited the need for more efficient scheduling of computer labs when a course did not need the computer lab for every session.

(5) Instructional teaching assistants

In response to this question, Pioneers commented on the individual ITA that they worked with during the semester. Overall, Faculty reported positively on the ITAs dedication and their vital assistance in supporting the course. ITAs were cited as important to the success of the Pioneer program as well, due to the significant level of help they provide Pioneers. Many Faculty reported using the ITA to help integrate technology into courses through a variety of activities including scanning, web page preparation and maintenance, video capture, and e-share. ITAs were also useful for aiding students using computers and providing intense one-on-one student support. Some Faculty commented on the considerable time commitment needed to be an ITA, as well as the level of accountability needed to hold the position. Some ITA challenges identified were unfamiliarity with certain applications, ITAs being overcommitted, and the overall process of recruiting ITAs. A suggestion was made to better match ITA skills with Faculty needs and expand the offering of ITA positions to more Hofstra Students.

(6) Problems that arose

Many of the responses to this question were similar to that expressed for the question on the computer lab environment. Several Faculty members made note of unreliable computers, slow Internet access, poor administration of networked software applications (e.g., access difficulties), server problems and difficulties with using Eshare. One individual mentioned the need for support when working off campus. A few Faculty cited problems with how ITAs managed their time, and one ITA did not respond to the e-mail sent by the Professor.

(7) Suggestions for improvements

In general, Faculty reported the need for a greater commitment from Hofstra to the Pioneer Program. Resources in the form of new computers, software and projects were cited as essential to the success of the educational technology courses. Some of the specific suggestions included:

- Clearer description of ITA position (e.g., hours needed, relationship with instructor, training needed)
- Better support for using labs
- Update lab facilities (e.g., equipment, sound system)
- Improve web server to allow for faster interacting with web pages
- Improve Student e-mail so they can send attachments more easily
- Improve or replace Eshare (i.e., one Pioneer suggested using a listserv instead)
- Provide lab access on weekends
- Improve overall communication between Pioneers and Administrators for laboratories

One Faculty member proposed the assignment of ITAs to Professors instead of courses for the purpose of developing the skills and knowledge of the ITA and enhancing their contribution to the development and offering of future technology based teaching initiatives. Suggestions were also made for enlarging the ITA applicant pool with a more thorough recruitment and selection process (e.g., better matching of skills and interests between Faculty and ITAs).

(3) Additional comments

Faculty reported positively about their educational technology experience. Several commented on how much they and their Students gained through the Pioneer Program. ITAs were cited as vital to the success of technology integration. The ability to interact with and learn from other Faculty members about educational technology was important to Pioneers. Some responses focused on the problems experienced using the labs and some of the equipment as previously mentioned. Faculty conveyed the importance of a greater commitment to this program for increased effectiveness in the future, and an increase in the budget for the Center for Teaching Excellence. One Faculty member commented on the importance of considering the use and application of educational technology in tenure decisions.

2.2 ITA Feedback

ITAs were asked the following questions regarding their experience as a technology assistant over the Fall 1999 and Spring 2000 semesters asking them to respond to the following questions: (1) On average approximately how much time per week did you put into this project? (2) What were the strengths of the class? (3) How adequate was the educational technology? (4) What problems did you encounter? What concerns did you have? (5) What did you get out of the experience? (6) What suggestions do you have for improvement? (7) What additional training did you have? (8) Additional comments. Responses from seven of the ITAs were received. A summary of the comments follow.

(1) On average, approximately how much time per week did you put into this project?

ITAs reported large differences in the amount of time they spent per week supporting their respective courses. Hours ranged from 3-16 per week, with an overall average of approximately 8 hours. The majority of this time was allotted for computer applications, including: web work (researching links and constructing course pages); creating PowerPoint presentations; and burning CD's. Additional time was required for meetings with both Pioneers and other ITAs, discussing student progress, course materials, and technology difficulties. Student interaction was mentioned to a lesser extent as a component of the duties of the ITA.

(2) What were the strengths of the class?

The elevated level of student enthusiasm toward the subject material and using educational technology, as well as having an opportunity to work with their particular Pioneer Faculty member were reported strengths of the class. Two ITAs cited the benefits provided by participating in the learning sessions and seminars as well.

(3) How adequate was the computer lab environment?

ITAs reported that the overall adequacy of the technology in the labs was sufficient. Internet access, including email and web site research facilitated the course communication and information processing. Several ITAs noted that more complicated programs such as FLASH and other graphic or video intensive software needed to operate on faster computers, and not all the labs had the same software. One option an ITA mentioned that would be attractive was if Hofstra would provide ITAs programs for their home use. Another suggestion provided was a special computer room dedicated to ITA use only to ensure computer availability for ITAs.

(4) What problems did you encounter? What concerns did you have?

Most of the problems reported by the ITAs were related to computer trouble and not the structure of the program. The most frequent difficulty conveyed was uploading course pages to the web. Trouble with the Hofstra server, both speed and crashing, made this problematic for ITAs, and the overall slow speed of the computers was a concern as well. One ITA expressed concern over the relationship with their Pioneer.

(5) What did you get out of the experience?

The ITAs reported many benefits from participating in this program, including:

- The opportunity to work with Pioneer Faculty and other ITAs
- Satisfaction from helping Students with assignments and the technology itself
- Greater overall knowledge of computers
- Discovering information available on the Internet
- Exposure to new software applications

(3) What suggestions do you have for improvement?

ITAs had several suggestions for improvement, including making the server for uploading web pages easier to use (e.g., increasing both the speed of the process and the ease of ITA access), scheduling Pioneer meetings and seminars at times that made it more convenient for ITAs to attend, tutorials on some of the software, and matching the ITAs with the Pioneers..

(4) What additional training did you have?

The majority of the ITAs did not report needing additional training to carry out their role. Attendance at meetings with more experienced ITAs were reported to be helpful. Some of the more complex educational technology, such as PhotoShop, Dreamweaver, HTML and video capture, required some additional training. Several ITAs expressed that additional training in these areas would be beneficial.

(5) Additional comments

ITAs expressed a desire for improved communications and relations between ITAs and Faculty. More social events was mentioned as a way for ITAs and Pioneers to get to know each other better.

2.3 Student Feedback

Students were asked the following questions regarding their experience as a participants in Pioneer Program courses during the Fall 1999 semester: (1) Strengths of the class (2) Satisfaction with Technology and/or computer lab environment (3) Suggestions for improvement (4) Additional comments. A summary of the comments follow.

(1) Strengths of the class

In general, Students had positive reactions towards the inclusion of educational technology into the course and the enhanced learning environment resulting from its

implementation. Many remarked that they had not been exposed to several of the software applications used in the courses, and became more familiar with computers in general. The primary strengths cited by the Students were the use of PowerPoint presentations to augment lecture material; exposure to multimedia applications; inclusion of the Internet for various purposes; and the enhanced learning opportunities provided by the application of technology. Some benefits that Students often cited included:

- More interactive lectures using PowerPoint (e.g., visual aids, illustrations)
- Online access to PowerPoint class notes
- The hands-on experience provided by the computer labs
- Course websites providing additional/supplemental information
- Introduction to new multimedia software programs
- Getting opinions and feedback from other classmates
- Increased class participation, both overall level and quantity of Students
- Ease of access and open communication with Professors via email
- Opportunities to learn how to utilize the Internet and develop web pages/applications
- Course bulletin boards and on-line discussions to enhance interactions with Professors and classmates
- Decreased costs of printing course materials

(2) Satisfaction with technology *and/or* computer lab environment

Student comments regarding the technology itself and the computer lab environment were mixed. Many reported positively regarding the opportunity to use the computers, and some reported favorably about the opportunities provided by computer involvement in their education. Favorable reactions to having course web pages were expressed by a majority of Students. Gallon wing in the Business Development Center was also mentioned as a favorable facility. Comments reflecting positive aspects of either the technology itself or the computer lab environment included:

- Very impressed with the software used in the respective courses
- Enjoyed atmosphere in the computer lab (as opposed to a traditional classroom)
- Websites complemented course lectures well
- Email capabilities

Others cited problems with the hardware and software applications located in the computer labs. The most common criticisms expressed pertained to the speed and reliability of the computers. Other problems reported to occur throughout the semester included:

- Computer crashes
- Missing software
- Hofstra server difficulties
- Network difficulties - either logging on, uploading or accessing the course websites
- Presentations hindered by technology not working properly
- Large class sizes problematic for computer labs

The comments regarding the actual computer environments were dependent on the specific lab, but in general were less than favorable. The climate of the rooms was said to be

unreliable (although the Gallon Wing was cited as very favorable), computers were not always available for each Student, some of the technology was reported to be out of date, proximas and overheads were not always operational, and the availability and knowledge of lab assistants fluctuated significantly.

(3) Suggestions for improvement

Many Students provided suggestions for improving the overall quality of the courses. Amongst the less satisfied individuals, there was a clear consensus that the general state of the hardware, software, and computer labs needed to be upgraded for future usage. Specifically, the most frequent improvement cited was increased computer speed and better Internet/network access. E-reserve was said to be troublesome as well; Students using America Online could not access this information, and several Students that could reported that the information was not scanned in clearly/properly. Another lab-related complaint that appeared often was the necessity for better control of the computer facilities. Students reported difficulties accessing the lab on weekends and off-hours, and were distracted by other individuals in the lab not participating in the actual course. Several others mentioned that laptops would be more beneficial than PCs in the computer labs, and that in certain labs it is difficult to see the Professor.

Some Students provided suggestions that centered on the course itself. Several reported that the course material was overwhelming when combined with the computer requirements. Some individuals related that a computer course should be a prerequisite, and these Students felt they were at a disadvantage when compared to peers with better computer skills and experience. This lack of operating knowledge frustrated certain individuals, who could not maintain the pace of the course. Other Students expressed the need for greater instruction within the course for applications they were not familiar with. A few Students suggested limiting material in Pioneer courses to compensate for the incorporation of educational technology, especially at the underclassman level. One Student cited the possibility of eliminating the need for computer labs by bringing computers into the classroom.

(4) Additional comments

Students reported positively with respect to the Professors who taught Pioneer courses. A majority cited the “fun” generated by the use of computers, and related that they learned a lot in the course. Some Students expressed frustration that the problems with the computers affected the general functioning of the course. Some Students also cited the increased amount of work due to the inclusion of computers, and one individual suggested increasing the credits allotted for course completion. In general, Students reported that they were glad that they took part in these Pioneer courses. One individual commented that “over time the class will evolve and it will only get better than it is now”.

APPENDIX A

Faculty Survey Evaluation Form

TO: Instructional Technology Pioneer

FROM: Michael T. Barriere, Ph.D.
Evaluator, Center for Teaching Excellence

DATE: November 22, 1999

RE: Evaluation of Instructional Technology Initiative

Dear Colleague:

Since its inception in 1997, the Pioneer Program has been well received and is now completing its 4th semester. The program started with an initial group of 14 Faculty members and has now grown to 23 members, with the anticipation that several new members will be joining the group this Spring. An interesting trend is how increasing numbers of Faculty members are joining from departments where one member has already been involved with the program. The program is also expanding with respect to the diversity of technology applications Faculty members are experimenting with. In order to maintain this momentum, improve the programs effectiveness, and maximize the manner in which specific Faculty member needs are being met, we need your feedback. There are several options for providing your feedback: (1) you can respond to the evaluation form enclosed in this packet, (2) you can respond electronically by visiting the CTE web site: http://www.hofstra.edu/CTE/pioneer_eval.html, or (3) you can meet with me, at your convenience, some time over the next 3 weeks. It is also important to gather feedback from your students to ensure the program is addressing their needs as well. Enclosed in this packet is a Student Feedback Form that we would like you to administer to your students before the end of this semester.

Thank you in advance for providing your feedback. I will be following up via telephone to schedule a meeting time if you are interested and to discuss any question you may have about the program or this evaluation. An e-mail version of this letter is also being sent with the evaluation forms attached and a link to the CTE web page mentioned above.

Enclosure:

(1) Faculty form (pink) - for your reactions and observations about your experience as an instructional technology pioneer this semester. We are interested in your comments about how the course progressed and if it was consistent with the goals and objectives that you had originally planned, what problems arose (if any), what suggestions you have for improving the program, how helpful were the instructional assistants assigned to you, and any other comments you may have. If you have any material that you think would be useful for me in my evaluation of the project (e.g., samples of students' work, any evaluations or comments from the students that you may have collected throughout the semester), I would greatly appreciate copies.

(2) Student forms - to assess the reactions of the students in your class(es). If you need more than the number that I've enclosed, please duplicate as many as necessary.

Please return all of the forms to me: Center for Teaching Excellence, 200 West Library Wing (x3-6350, e-mail: psymbt@hofstra.edu).

Faculty Questions

- (1) How did you integrate technology into the class?**
- (2) How did the integration of technology fit in with the goals and objectives you had for the class?**
- (3) Strengths of the class**
- (4) Computer lab environment**
- (5) Instructional teaching assistants**
- (6) Problems that arose**
- (7) Suggestions for improvements**
- (8) Additional comments**

ITA Survey Evaluation Form

TO: Instructional Technology Assistant (ITA)
FROM: Michael T. Barriere, Evaluator
DATE: October 14, 2000
RE: Evaluation of Instructional Technology Initiative

Dear Instructional Technology Assistant:

Since its inception in 1997, the Pioneer Program has been well received by both Faculty and Students and is now completing its 4th semester. The program is also expanding with respect to the diversity of technology applications Faculty members are experimenting with. The role of the Instructional Technology Assistant (ITA) is recognized as a critical component to success of the program. In order to maintain the momentum of the program, improve effectiveness, and maximize the manner in which the needs of Faculty, Students, and ITA's are being met, we have continued to conduct and evaluation of the program. So far this semester Faculty members have been asked to complete an evaluation feedback form as well as the Students enrolled in their classes. We are very interested in your feedback as well, since you have played an integral role in this processes and can provide a unique perspective on what it requires to be an ITA, how you think the program is going (i.e., strengths/weaknesses), and areas where the program can be improved.

You can provide your feedback be visiting the CTE web site:

http://www.hofstra.edu/CTE/ita_eval.html

You can also meet with me some time over the next 2 weeks by calling X 3-6350 to set up a meeting time. Thank you in advance for providing your feedback. I will be available at the above phone extension or e-mail (psymtb@hofstra.edu) to discuss any question you may have about the program or this evaluation.

ITA Questions

ITA NAME:

PIONEER NAME:

HOURS PER WEEK:

STRENGTHS:

ADEQUACY OF TECHNOLOGY:

PROBLEMS/CONCERNS:

GET OUT OF EXPERIENCE:

SUGGESTIONS:

ADDITIONAL TRAINING:

COMMENTS:

Student Evaluation Survey Form

Class: _____

This class is part of the new Instructional Technology Initiative that Hofstra University has begun this spring. In an effort to help us improve and expand this program we would appreciate your feedback. Please comment on the strengths of the class, computer lab environment, and any suggestions you may have for improvement. THANK YOU FOR YOUR INPUT.

STRENGTHS OF THE CLASS:

COMPUTER LAB ENVIRONMENT:

SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENTS:

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS: