

Collaborative Online Teaching Advanced Chinese and Culture Project

ACS Mellon Foundation Faculty Renewal Grant Final Report

This project is an ongoing attempt to establish meaningful collaborative efforts between Rollins College and Southwestern University in our respective Chinese Programs. The project for which we received funding is a pilot of a classroom interchange, sharing lectures between two classrooms on two occasions. As we state in our initial proposal, “Our primary goal is to test the instructional model established by Sunoikisis (a ‘national consortium of Classics programs’), which is facilitated by online collaboration. Our primary objectives are to use available technologies, such as the Moodle course management system and Elluminate desktop videoconferencing to promote advanced Chinese learning and inter-campus collaborative teaching.”

Our project changed in minor ways during the developments. The lectures did not take place on the original dates due to competing responsibilities. We also did not use one of the planned centralized course management systems (CMS), but we did use Rollins’ default school CMS with designated webpages, along with printed materials to run our pilot project. For the content delivery, we adopted a combination of a software-based conferencing technology (Adobe Connect) and a hardware-based conference system over a land-line phone line for better sound quality. Our respective ITS staff (Ed Huffman and Melanie Hoag) developed an in-house system for the lecture and content delivery. NITLE did not consult or participate in a significant way because of a delay in response, by which time ITS had worked out a preferred connection.

We achieved our goals/objectives through two experimental lectures facilitated by conferencing technology. The participant students seemed to approve the electronically mediated face-to-face interaction. They also appreciated our cross-disciplinary treatment of the content (Ethnomusicology, Comparative Literature), which would otherwise be impossible if offered by a single instructor.

Two measures were used for evaluation/assessment: 1) Course-embedded assignments (quiz, homework assignments, and post-session reflection papers); 2) Post-sessions survey as an indirect measure of satisfaction and engagement. Based on the data collected through course-embedded assignments, students showed a good understanding of the lecture content and a high interest in learning diverse subjects of Chinese culture. Our post-sessions survey is still being conducted, and hopefully it will provide some indication of overall learning outcomes and the extent to which our students wish to continue exploring broader learning content and more dynamic interactivities.

If we were to re-do the project it would probably look almost exactly as it did in its final form, but with a structure and procedures for the students to interact with each other before and after the activity. But we learned several important points from this project. 1) We concluded that we would like more interactive activities between the instructors and the students and between the two classes of the students. 2) We learned that collaboration is a serious commitment of time and effort. The demands placed upon instructors forms one of the constant challenges in all of these. It is time consuming to add a development to a course of any kind, to coordinate the technological aspects—even if it simply means checking the

connections an hour before the lecture, and then to team teach a lecture from a distance. They were higher than we expected. We also found it rewarding. 3) We identified some possible advantages of using many stations and connecting with the other classrooms via individual monitors or stations for the students, but we would probably have kept the same format for the pilot nonetheless. The group interaction at either end was enjoyable and useful. 4) We learned that contracts and paperwork should be completed *before* the project and not afterwards. We had difficulty obtaining a W-9 from one musician which delayed the submission of financial records for the grant to the last possible moment.

Our project received interest from other faculty. The Chair of Modern Languages & Literatures Dept. at Rollins College (Dr. Nancy Decker) was very interested in our experiment and sat in one of the online lectures. Subsequently she initiated a contact with Dr. Erika Berroth, her German language colleague at Southwestern University for a possible online collaborative course in German history.

Our project has also had an influence on the leadership of the two schools. The President of Rollins College, Dr. Lewis Duncan, is very supportive of our project. He promotes a wider collaboration among ACS schools using more advanced teleconferencing technology. The Interim Dean of A&S at Rollins College, Dr. Debra Wellman, has submitted two courses (one German language and history, one Ethnomusicology course) to ACS aimed at promoting ACS-wide collaborative teaching and learning. Dr. Jim Hunt, the Provost of Southwestern University and Jake Schrum, President of Southwestern both expressed their support and have inquired into the results. Dr. Hunt mentioned in connection with this project that collaboration is the future of education. ACS will re-create the music lecture for the presidents of ACS colleges in June of 2011. Furthermore, Rollins and Southwestern Chinese programs are making plans for closer coordination of programs, possibly adopting the same textbooks beginning in 2012-2013, and facilitating shared lectures and inter-program connections.

There are several planned venues for presentation and publication of the results of our project. Li Wei will be presenting a paper entitled, "Tradition meets 'Virtual Classroom': Conferencing Technology-Mediated Chinese Language Teaching in Liberal Arts Education," at the 9th BCLTS International Symposium on Innovation and Standardisation in Teaching and Learning Chinese (British Chinese Language Teaching Society) at the University of Edinburgh, June 29-July 1, 2011. In addition, Carl Robertson and Li Wei, along with Richard Lu (Spelman College), will present our preliminary findings in a panel called "'College is Short': Online Language Collaboration in a Liberal Arts Consortium" at 2011 ACTFL Convention in Denver, November 18-20. We expect that at least one article will emerge from our scholarly engagement with the project.

Our next steps with the project include a post-sessions survey which we have not yet analyzed. We are considering expanding the scope of online collaboration with other ACS schools that have Chinese programs. We plan to share lectures again in the coming year as mentioned above, making use of Skype or other video-conferencing or social networking methods. We also plan to explore iPad technology in language teaching and web conferencing applications as a shared endeavor between programs, students and instructors. We hope to establish an active online student community that functions in Chinese or about Chinese language and culture between Rollins and Southwestern students.

Summary for Inclusion in ACS Website:

The Southwestern University-Rollins College joint Chinese classes through online collaboration are among the first attempt within ACS to use the Internet and videoconferencing technologies to teach advanced Chinese and culture. This pilot program was aimed at infusing specialized content in upper level Chinese courses by sharing instructional resources through cross-campus collaboration. The first two online seminars are focused on traditional Chinese instrumental music and analysis of the opening poem of the 16th century Chinese novel, *The Journey to the West*, respectively.