

Progress Report for ACS Information Fluency Project Grant 2001

Maximizing Audience and Student-Perceived Relevance: Teaching Information Fluency in Introductory Biology Courses Davidson College

The goal of this project is to allow students to develop information fluency skills early in their college career in a setting where they can see direct application of the skills they are acquiring in their other course work. The planning phase of this grant was extended due to the fact that the funds were not available until August 13th 2001, rather than May 31st 2001, and classes began on August 20th. As part of the planning phase the faculty/staff members of this team met numerous times, developed an outline for each of the six modules and determined who would be in charge of developing each module further. Also during the summer the faculty/staff team attended a three day institute to learn how to access and use the

Blackboard portal system. Mur Muchane is the head of the Center for Instructional Technology at Davidson and his expertise has been invaluable in learning how to use this system. Frank Molinek has visited numerous biology classes to give instruction on databases and library resources and has compiled resources in these areas. The first module is complete and has been posted to Blackboard. The others are in various stages of development.

In our summer meetings we outlined information fluency content areas and also considered where the modules would fit in the laboratory sequence and what information students would have already covered in their class and lab work. Using the class and lab material as a guideline, recent journal articles have been chosen as examples for modules covering database searches and the components of a scientific paper. In the database search module the article will be among those 'found' (a pedagogical 'ringer' so to speak). In the components of a scientific paper students will discuss the purpose of each section of a journal article and the role of citations. The article content will not be discussed per se but having an article that covers a familiar topic and shows overlap between lab and lecture material will support the importance of the information fluency exercise. The six modules will be completed one week before the students' second lab report and oral presentation are due. By using this timing they will be able to immediately apply their new skills.

We expect to move the modules from development to testing phase in mid November. Karen Bernd and Victoria Statler (Davidson '03) have been in contact through this stage of development and her input is being incorporated in the initial drafts of the modules. Karen is also guest lecturing in an introductory biology course from Oct 8th to Nov 1st and is using this time to identify the second student that will participate in this project. Given the fact that the timeline of the project was pushed back, it is expected that the student review and revision portion will occur in three more 'intensive' meetings rather than one module at a time.

