

ASSOCIATED COLLEGES OF THE SOUTH
Grant Request to the Robert W. Woodruff Foundation
New Initiatives in Cost Containment, 2000-2003
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Associated Colleges of the South

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Grant Request to the Robert W. Woodruff Foundation

by the Associated Colleges of the South

Purpose of the request: This proposal requests a grant of \$ 656,000 for the Associated Colleges of the South (ACS) to pursue a new cost-containment/reduction plan, building on an earlier grant from the Lettie Pate Evans Foundation. In particular, this request would fund specific cost containment/reduction projects in the areas of joint purchasing, administrative efficiency, and academic applications of technology for our fifteen member institutions.

The primary mission of ACS is to promote collaboration among its fifteen member institutions in whatever areas, academic or non-academic, are deemed feasible. The earlier grant enabled ACS to convene relevant personnel from member institutions to define the mission and goals of a consortium-wide cost containment effort, to identify needed resources both within and outside of ACS, to establish solid consortium networks to examine vital areas of common interest, such as joint purchasing and student admissions, and begin necessary planning. This proposal would marshal the knowledge and resources resulting from these activities and launch a three-year action plan to implement and institutionalize specific practices and policies leading to greater efficiencies in joint purchasing, and in applications of technology in selected administrative and academic functions. A description of each of the proposed project areas follows.

Proposed implementation projects

Joint Purchasing - Under the previous grant, ACS purchasing officers met on several occasions and developed a three-year cost containment/reduction plan for implementation throughout ACS. Preliminary estimates predict substantial savings, which are supported by the experiences of other institutions' collective purchasing programs, by ACS' own experiences with library joint purchases, and by the careful research of the ACS purchasing officers into their mutual purchasing needs and processes.

This grant would support the three-year implementation plan, allowing ACS to establish a process to negotiate contracts; to coordinate efforts with Emory University as a partner which would add significant economies of scale to joint purchasing activities; to develop, monitor, and update an ACS buying group web site; to conduct on-going evaluations of products and user satisfaction; and, where possible, to re-negotiate existing contract arrangements. In addition, recognizing the complexities of the undertaking, the grant funds would permit ACS to retain expert consultants to assist in such areas as the development of model contracts and to mobilize expertise at member institutions to create and maintain the web site.

Aside from the obvious financial benefits the joint purchasing plan is expected to produce, the ancillary activities, such as the web site, will keep member institutions advised of new buying opportunities, communicate valuable evaluative information about products and vendors, promote rapid and frequent communication among purchasing officers at the institutions, and spark improvements in purchasing activities and processes.

Administrative efficiency - In this area, the focus is on benchmarking as "an approach to facilitating change by systematically and creatively borrowing ideas from others." The consortium is convinced that comparing operations across its 15 institutions, directed toward transferring "best practices" in certain areas to the other institutions, will result in notable efficiencies, improved operations, and cost containment, as well as more efficient administrators and leaders.

The current proposal envisions implementation of benchmarking techniques in three areas: administrative technology, business operations, and the admissions offices (with emphasis on the uses of technology). For example, the admissions office on any campus is a high-cost and a high priority function. More efficient use of technology, therefore, offers an attractive payback that would appeal to every institution. Cooperative training programs, joint publications, adoption of common listserves and joint servers as a means of distributing information are just a few promising technology applications that may reduce, or at the very least help contain, admissions office budgets at ACS institutions.

In each of the three focus areas, funds would be used to retain consultants to assist in the design, distribution, and analysis of questionnaires to gather information; and to assemble key institutional groups for workshops to review and compare results in the targeted functional areas, and to identify best practices to be implemented and evaluate their application.

Once again, the potential financial benefits are multiplied by the professional dividends to be gained by stimulating collaboration and learning in critical non-academic areas and supporting innovative approaches to common concerns.

Academic applications of technology - ACS recognizes that technology can leverage the resources of the individual institutions to expand academic offerings for the benefit of all, in a manner that is both cost effective and high quality. The consortium proposes to form two "virtual departments" in the related areas of Modern Languages and Latin American Studies (LAS) as laboratories for the application of technology that will link the appropriate faculty at each AGS institution to create a coherent, interactive whole.

A focus on computer-assisted language instruction has existed nationally for more than a decade through pioneering efforts such as those of CALICO (the Computer-Assisted Language Instruction Consortium) and IALL (the International Association of Language Learning Technologies). Over that time, technology has improved and gained credibility in its ability to enhance the study of foreign language and increase student interest in languages.

ACS proposes to carry technology to its logical next step, and one that is particularly well-suited to the needs of small liberal arts colleges. On one hand, these institutions pride themselves on teaching excellence and student-centered learning. At the same time, their smallness oftentimes results in fewer individual resources, and a less-developed technological infrastructure. But, cooperatively, they can combine the teaching abilities of strong faculty with the technological expertise of some of their larger members to create a better, more comprehensive product for all of their institutions,

Within Modern Language departments, faculty in the less popular languages (e.g., Russian, Japanese, Italian, Chinese) are handicapped especially by dwindling enrollment, the need for a four-year curriculum for majors and minors, and a resulting heavy course load for the limited faculty available. By creating a virtual department drawing on the 200 modern language faculty across ACS, many of these problems could be alleviated.

ACS will build on the successful series of two workshops for Modern Language Faculty held in 1997 and 1998, funded by the Lettie Pate Evans Foundation. It will broaden the focus to that of strategic planning for technology in modern languages and the development and implementation of collaborative courses for ACS students.

ACS will sponsor six-day summer workshops/planning meetings for ACS language faculty at the ACS Technology Center. In addition, the "virtual department" will encourage competition for "collaboration grants" that would support release time for faculty teams from multiple institutions to work on specific projects or collaborative courses.

Besides providing continuing training and course development opportunities, attendees at these workshops will devise workable plans for best utilizing the available human resources to benefit the maximum number of students, while reducing the burden on faculty. For example, the virtual department may offer on-line intermediate and advanced courses in Russian open to all ACS students, but taught by only one or two of the eleven ACS Russian professors, freeing others to offer more sections of beginning level courses.

A virtual department promises cost-containment along with appreciable positive impacts on learning. It will maximize the use of resources, minimize duplication of effort, allow a wider range of language course offerings to ACS students, strengthen language instruction as a whole, promote collaboration among faculty, and encourage innovative teaching and learning techniques.

The proposed virtual department in Latin American Studies (LAS) will move beyond language instruction alone to permit multidisciplinary cooperation among faculty interested in a specific geo-cultural area. The approach would link LAS faculty with specialties in economics, anthropology, history, literature, politics, art, geography, as well as language. A collegial bond already exists as an outgrowth of their participation in the annual Birmingham-Southern College Latin American Studies Conference.

The goal will be to expose and train these professors in technological techniques and resources that would enhance classroom teaching and to create an ACS Latin American Studies program. This would be accomplished through two highly focused workshops, the first of which would stress constructing technological products (e.g., web pages, course modules) tailored to the needs of all AGS institutions, cataloguing individual faculty expertise, and studying ways to most effectively coordinate activities and expertise in LAS. The second workshop would explore the use of multimedia approaches to bring the LAS program from the campus to the consortium level, and the mechanisms required to develop the cohesion necessary to function as a

coordinated group rather than a disparate group of Latin Americanists. The outcome would be the creation of one of the largest undergraduate Latin American Studies programs in the U. S.

ACS is confident that the LAS program can be a reality and that its first on-line courses could be available as early as the 2000-01 academic program. ACS already has on campus talent in both LAS and technology to provide core leadership for the program and enthusiastic faculty in the multiple disciplines involved. The LAS program will broaden the curriculum substantially, reduce the need for individual campuses to hire new faculty, increase interest in LAS as a major, provide an incentive for other departments to explore the benefits of 'virtual departments,' and generate a multidisciplinary, multi-school model capable of being replicated within and outside of ACS.

Cooperative Technology Training - The final component of this proposal is to support more broad-based technology training for ACS faculties through ACS' state-of-the art Technology Center. The Technology Center contains a classroom with 24 workstations and a multimedia projection system, which can be divided into two classrooms with separate projection systems, a multimedia development lab, and office space for visiting ACS faculty members and workshop leaders. The Center is also a consortium resource and "help desk" on technological issues. The Center became fully operational in June 1999, and has since hosted numerous workshops and seminars on a variety of technology-related topics.

With such a facility at its disposal, ACS is uniquely positioned to address a continuing need to increase technology literacy among its faculty. Though great strides have been made in

achieving basic technology literacy, considerable variation still exists beyond that in the level of faculty experience, expertise, and comfort level with technology.

Since the Technology Center is a dedicated consortium resource, ACS can hold 5-7 day technology workshops throughout the summer.

Technology training will be offered at two levels: intermediate and advanced. Furthermore, all training would focus on translating technology to a pedagogical level, including hands-on experience with peer instructors or mentors and extensive follow-up on the actual use of technology for teaching.

Funds would also be used by the Technology Center to host ACS Technology Fellows, faculty or staff members on leave to pursue pioneering pedagogical or curricular projects (technology-based) that will be shared ultimately with the rest of the consortium. The Technology Center will also evolve as the central repository of course materials, created by AGS faculty through Center workshops or Technology Fellowships, that can be accessed by all ACS institutions.

Summary and conclusion - The Associated Colleges of the South requests funding for the implementation of a three-year cost containment program that affects both academic and non-academic areas of its member institutions. We propose initiatives in joint purchasing, administrative benchmarking, academic applications of technology, and cooperative technology training that will result in cost control (if not substantial savings), while also producing

significant improvements in professional training, curricular offerings, classroom teaching, student learning, and collaborative ventures. ACS is ready to bring its plans to fruition, and hopes that the Robert W. Woodruff Foundation will support this exciting and important effort.

THE ASSOCIATED COLLEGES OF THE SOUTH

This proposal is submitted by the Associated Colleges of the South (ACS), a consortium comprised of fifteen outstanding independent liberal arts colleges and universities in twelve southeastern states. The Associated Colleges of the South was incorporated in 1991 in order to enrich academic programs and conserve financial resources through collaboration among member institutions. In the academic area, achievements have included extensive technology training for faculty and pedagogical workshops for faculty, helping them to become stronger teachers. Conservation of resources has included an energy conservation initiative through which the participating institutions controlled costs in a myriad of ways.

Member institutions include: Birmingham-Southern College, Centenary College, Centre College, Davidson College, Furman University, Hendrix College, Millsaps College, Morehouse College, Rhodes College, Rollins College, Southwestern University, Trinity University, University of Richmond, University of the South and Washington and Lee University.

INTRODUCTION

Following is the plan that the ACS would like to pursue in collaboration with the Robert W. Woodruff Foundation. Together, the ideas contained in the plan constitute an integrated plan through which the ACS can set new standards for saving and controlling expenses in the areas of joint purchasing, administrative efficiency, and effective academic use of technology. These are remarkable opportunities for ACS to create models for cooperation that can be replicated by others. The consortium hopes that these ideas will merit the attention and support of the Foundation.

This new plan is a logical extension of an earlier grant from the Lettie Pate Evans Foundation in these areas - a splendid grant that enabled the consortium to define missions, make connections and establish solid networks. Now, the ACS wants to move into a dynamic and comprehensive action phase. A solid foundation has been established on which we can put in place and institutionalize specific practices and policies for the future.

Special attention should be drawn to the matter of cost-containment, underscoring the fact that this is an extremely high priority for ACS. In fact, a key reason for the consortium's existence is to contain expenses through cooperative activities. Consequently, we attach extraordinary importance to this proposal, recognizing that it can make a substantial impact on the individual institutions while demonstrating to other groups that collaboration can and will work.

ADMINISTRATIVE COOPERATION

Joint Purchasing Initiatives - Meeting the Challenge of Expanding Costs and Duplication

Building on previous support, which enabled purchasing officers within ACS to meet with one another and plan for the future, the consortium plans a three-year implementation program to put its plans into action. Based on its experience with library purchases, and working closely with Emory University, ACS seeks to put into practice a joint purchasing initiative that would become institutionalized after three years. Based on preliminary indications, the potential for cost-containment and savings is very significant.

Support is sought basically for the consortium to negotiate contracts, coordinate efforts with Emory, develop and monitor an ACS buying group web site, assist the institutions in the process of buying goods and services, carry out on-going evaluation of products and user satisfaction, and re-negotiate contract arrangements.

In this process, the consortium also plans to examine the new and dynamic area of electronic or e-commerce with an eye toward making the ACS an effective collaborative electronic buying group. The ACS expects to learn from the experience of individual institutions that are making use of e-commerce, applying the lessons learned to all ACS members.

The consortium recognizes that joint purchasing is a very complicated and sometimes protracted process. Consequently, the group needs to draw on consulting expertise to write model contracts. It needs to mobilize expertise in the institutions to create a website and other forms of communication through which new buying opportunities can be made known throughout the

fifteen campuses. It needs to assist the member colleges and universities in coordinating their efforts, with the purchasing officers playing a valuable role. Moreover, it must collect a group of knowledgeable individuals - from within and outside of the consortium - to monitor and assess the effort, recommending improvements as the process unfolds.

Administrative Benchmarking - Meeting the Challenge of Efficiency and Cost

Containment

The consortium seeks to carry out a variety of benchmarking activities, including but not necessarily limited to administrative technology, business functions, and the office of admissions (emphasizing the use of technology). The ACS sees significant potential in comparing operations across the 15 institutions, with an eye toward transferring "best practices" in certain cases to other institutions, thereby achieving additional efficiencies and keeping costs in line. Based on preliminary efforts with the registrars and limited experience with two functions in the admissions area, the consortium feels there is remarkable potential for improving administrative operations, training individuals to be more effective administrators and leaders, and controlling and cutting costs in the process.

Along with expanded administrative use of technology have come concomitant increases in costs. There is great potential in examining who makes use of what technology, pointing to possibilities of collaboration and consolidation.

This also touches on the area of e-commerce as the consortium identifies the best ways to use technology in arranging for various goods and services.

Operations in the business area are becoming extremely complex, providing significant potential for redundancy and duplicatory activity, considerable expense and difficulty of coordination with other offices. Addressing the myriad functions in the office can pave the way for significant efficiencies.

The admissions office spends a significant amount of money, reflecting its high priority in a competitive marketplace. Consequently, the potential exists for efficiencies in use of technology, staff travel to remit students, and the numerous publications enticing students to enroll at their institutions. Clearly, the admissions staff can learn lessons from one another and explore collaborative efforts such as cooperative training programs in making effective use of technology, joint publications, and cooperative recruiting of minority and international students, all of which offer considerable promise of cost containment, if not cost reduction.

In these benchmarking areas, funds are sought to employ capable consultants, design and circulate questionnaire instruments, bring the key groups together for workshops to compare results, identify best practices to be implemented and evaluate application of best practices. Funds are also sought for consulting services, meetings of the various groups and evaluation of results.

The rationale behind this initiative is to promote learning from one another, uncover specific lessons that can be applied in new settings, and stimulate collaborative patterns among

participating institutions in the future. For example, testing new uses of technology may lead admissions staff to adopt common listserves and joint servers as mechanisms for distributing information. Together, they may create a technological clearinghouse of information that could serve all of the campuses. They may jointly use technology to focus on specific student markets.

ACADEMIC COOPERATION

ACS recognizes that it is important to examine our academic programs in light of new technological developments, in order to take advantage of the opportunities for cost containment that such technological advances will provide. Among these opportunities are the means for the consortium to offer centralized training to faculty, and the ability of disciplinary groups to communicate electronically and work essentially as a "virtual department." We propose to form two such virtual departments, in the related areas of Modern Languages and Latin American Studies (LAS). We believe that, by working as a single department, ACS faculty in languages and LAS will be able to overcome many of the inherent difficulties of smaller institutions.

Additionally, we will be able to offer our students opportunities that are usually only available at large research institutions, all in the context of a small liberal arts college environment.

We also propose a vigorous training program to enable faculty in all disciplines to continue to learn how the new technologies can not only enhance, but also revolutionize, classroom practices as well as the ways in which a consortium can work together.

A Virtual Department of Modern Languages

Background

Computer-assisted instruction in the Modern Languages has enjoyed a national focus for well over a decade through pioneering efforts such as those of CALICO (the Computer-Assisted Language Instruction Consortium) and IALL (the International Association of Language Learning Technologies). Computer-assisted language instruction is maturing as a field - and is enjoying increased stature in academia, as language Center directors emerge with more traditional academic credentials and as studies in second language acquisition have become "reputable" and have provided strong data to support the thesis that technology, and particularly emerging computer technologies, can and do enhance the study of foreign language and motivate increased student interest in languages.

At the same time, efforts in the field have been fragmented, and often technology related endeavors have been regarded as second class by more traditional scholars of literature and criticism. Despite recent Modern Language Association (MLA) guidelines for evaluation of such endeavors - and endorsement of them by the MLA as "valid" - a great deal of disciplinary schizophrenia still exists. One reason for this is that early efforts in the field of CALL often simply put older pedagogies (e.g., "drill and kill") onto a new medium (the computer) - and often, done as they were by people only somewhat conversant in the technology itself, they suffered as well from severe design and implementation flaws. As innovative (both pedagogically and technically) new intellectual products have emerged in recent years, they have

been met both with enthusiasm and with skepticism. This circumstance presents both a challenge and an opportunity.

Smaller liberal arts colleges are particularly poised to meet this challenge and to take advantage of this opportunity for (at least) two reasons: 1) their strong emphasis on teaching and student-centered learning and 2) a faculty size which fosters intellectual community and collaboration. Tipping the scale in the opposite direction, however, are the scarce resources related to smallness - among them the lack of a highly-developed infrastructure which supports technology endeavors among faculty (few liberal arts colleges have, for example, academic computing personnel devoted solely to support of faculty in multimedia development). It is only within well-conceived and implemented consortial endeavors that meaningful strides can be made - at least in the majority of cases.

The modern languages face, however, a formidable challenge in media collection, reliant as they are on not only text (much of it - especially literary sources - protected by copyright), but also on audio, video, and cultural materials of many kinds. Sharing of multimedia resources has been a stated goal of CALICO and IALL for many years; yet, wide sharing has been hindered by lack of shareable media (publishers usually will grant permission, for example, for videos to be digitized and integrated into interactive exercises within a single institution; those interactive applications, however, cannot be shared with other institutions, or put on the worldwide web, because of intellectual property and copyright concerns and restrictions). This circumstance is further exacerbated by legal uncertainties in an emerging field (copyright law as it relates to multimedia).

Moreover, faculty at small liberal arts colleges who teach the less popular modern languages face the additional challenge of dwindling enrollments coupled with the need to offer a full four-year program to majors and minors. It is often the case that such ACS faculty teach up to six courses per semester in order to keep their programs viable, though burnout is inevitable in such a situation. Because enrollment in upper division courses is often small (though no less a burden for the instructor), using technology to distribute these courses among faculty at all ACS institutions is an obvious means of alleviating the load for these faculty. Students will likewise benefit from the presence of that critical mass of cohorts so crucial for success in language courses. Although all 15 ACS institutions offer Spanish, French and German, only seven offer Russian and Japanese, and only four offer Chinese and Italian. Programs in these languages (and also in German at about half the ACS institutions) are especially hard-pressed, as there are generally only one or two instructors in a program. The Associated Colleges of the South Virtual Department of Modern Languages is designed to confront these issues in a way that can serve as a model for other disciplines as well as other consortia.

Plan for the Project

The establishment of the ACS Virtual Language Department will follow a highly successful series of two workshops for Modern Language Faculty at Millsaps College in the summers of 1997 and 1998, funded by the Lettie Pate Evans Foundation. It will broaden the focus to that of strategic planning for technology in the modern languages and the implementation of focused projects and collaborative courses for our students, drawing from participants from those two workshops as a core group. These new initiatives will also involve language faculty who may not

yet have had occasion to take advantage of those training activities. Having already forged collegial bonds and having a shared background of technology training, we believe ACS modern language faculty are prepared to take the next step of offering their first on-line collaborative courses. We believe that certain kinds of collaborations among the approximately 200 ACS modern language faculty provide an exciting opportunity for the realization of consortial efficiencies and program enhancement.

In order to provide continued training and planning opportunities for modern language faculty, we plan to offer six-day workshops/planning meetings for ACS language faculty during the summer at the ACS Technology Center. In addition, the virtual department will provide formalized support for specific consortial projects - on a competitive basis -during the academic year. These "collaboration grants" will call for release time for teams of faculty from multiple institutions working on specific projects or collaborative courses in designated languages. Faculty at member institutions also will be asked to commit to contributing to a consortium-wide media collection effort in conjunction with normal trips abroad, teaching in study abroad programs, and the like. These contributions might include taking photographs, videotaping interviews or cultural situations, or collecting textual materials for which permission-to-use can be obtained. Incremental out-of-pocket costs (which under the parameters described above should be very small) will be borne by member institutions. While the first workshop will be aimed primarily at faculty members, subsequent summer meetings of the virtual department might also include undergraduate students, especially after our initial offerings of collaborative on-line courses are underway, so that these students will have an opportunity to interact with their "virtual" professors and classmates face-to-face. These meetings will also provide faculty

with the opportunity to advise students about future courses and consortial study-abroad opportunities, though such advising will also take place on-line.

In addition to providing for continuing training and course development opportunities, we will use these face-to-face meetings for planning the best means of distributing our "human resources" among all ACS institutions in order both to benefit the maximum number of students and to alleviate the burden on faculty. For example, we might offer on-line intermediate and advanced courses in Russian that would be open to all ACS students, but taught by only one or two of the eleven ACS Russian professors, thus freeing others to offer more sections of beginning level courses. At the same time, an on-line beginning-level course in Russian or one of the other less frequently taught languages could be opened to ACS students at colleges where these languages have not been available in the past. We would also like to hire at least one consortial faculty member, selected to meet the needs of the consortium as a whole. This faculty member would be based at one of the institutions with videoconferencing facilities, in order that he or she might be used to the best advantage of all 15 institutions.

General Agendas for the Workshops:

Day One: Overview of the context for computer-assisted language learning in the modern languages (history, challenges, ongoing initiatives nationally). Systematic look at innovative multimedia products for language (listening, speaking, reading, writing, culture), as well as existing multimedia strategies or resources for literature and criticism. Begin planning of collaborative on-line courses (this will be the afternoon activity for each of the six days).

Day Two: Continuation of the systematic look at methodologies and strategies; review of technologies required to implement them (e.g., applications for building web pages). Focus group discussions by language: brainstorming and beginnings of strategy formulation and relationship building.

Day Three: Intensive hands-on instruction in building web pages using WYSIWYG editors; HTML instruction for the more advanced who want to be able to edit code behind the scenes. Hands-on instruction in preparing media for WWW distribution (scanning of text and graphics, digitizing of audio and video). Creating hypersyllabi.

Day Four: Continuation of the above, with formal focus group discussions of strategy for specific modules (non-text-specific) which can be shared among ACS member institutions.

Day Five: Begin organizing specific modules in the designated languages. Hands on assistance in pedagogical design.

Day Six: Wrap up of design of modules. Focus group planning of implementation strategies for the coming year. Discussion of the 'collaboration grants:" what they are and how to apply. Group discussion of what has been accomplished during the six days, elaboration or modification of goals, making commitments for the future.

Note: While the above represents a "normal track,' participants who have had previous training in basic methodologies will be able to pursue projects at their own pace, taking advantage of the facilities available at the ACS Technology Center. It is expected, however, that those projects will be opened to others for joint participation. Because of cross-platform considerations, initial focus will be on the web. If demand is sufficient, an advanced track will be offered in both workshops which will focus on interactive webbing (e.g., adding interactivity to web pages

through cgi- or Java-based applications, especially useful for on-line exercises and quizzes). In addition to the training outlined above, considerable time will be spent planning on-line courses, and, ultimately, a shared curriculum. Throughout the workshop, the ACS Technology Center staff will assist with setting up materials and access on-line in such a way as to best facilitate future virtual collaborations.

Impact on Learning

This project offers the promise of strengthening language instruction at ACS member institutions in a variety of ways. It will encourage (if not "force") participants to rethink long-standing pedagogical assumptions and to move from the common question of "how can the computer help me do better what I now do?" to "how do computer technologies give me the possibility of doing new things which have the potential for enhancing student proficiency and interest?" It will foster the breaking down of classroom walls and the movement from a teacher-centered to a student-centered learning environment, where "teachers" come in a variety of shapes and forms and from a variety of sources. The module approach will encourage versatility (not being tied to one textbook) and independence (for how long will we even need textbooks in the form we now have them?). Individual faculty members will be challenged and inspired by others' ideas, and collaboration will lead to innovation. They will, at the same time, attain some degree of technical fluency - while concentrating on their primary goal, development of an intellectual product with integrity. The emphasis on collection of shareable media will encourage the attitude that "we are - and must be - in this together," in addition to providing cost efficiencies by avoiding the need for duplication of such resources on all 15 campuses.

Students at ACS member institutions will benefit from access to a larger faculty, including specialists in topics not available at individual institutions, and to learning tools which are relevant and "real" to them - and which afford them the opportunity to attain a proficiency not usually attained via more traditional methodologies. Modern Language Departments will benefit from "enhanced" courses, more time to devote to students thanks to inter-institution sharing of teaching responsibilities and access to colleagues in their own languages that many do not currently have in the context of the individual institutions.

A Virtual Department of Latin American Studies

Background

Within the Associated Colleges of the South are a large number of professors in various departments whose teaching and research is focused on some aspect of Latin America. Some of the broad areas covered include economics, anthropology, history, literature, biology, politics, art, language, and geography. There is great potential for developing a community of Latin Americanists (teachers and students) that would effectively harness this multidisciplinary through the use of technology. Many of these faculty have a history of working together, in the context of the annual Birmingham-Southern College Latin American Studies Conference. As with the virtual Modern Language department, we intend to draw upon this group to provide leadership for the project.

Plan for the Project

The purpose of a Virtual Department of Latin American Studies in the Associated Colleges of the South would be two-fold. One would be to expose and train professors to use techniques and resources which would enhance the quality of their classroom teaching. The second would be to help create a Latin American Studies program in the Associated Colleges of the South, bringing the various disciplines involved in the teaching of Latin American Studies together into a consolidated and interacting whole. In essence, the technology and expertise acquired at the planned workshops would not only be directed at making the individuals more effective and informed in the teaching of their respective areas, whether it is Latin American Literature or South American Archaeology, but at creating a new multidisciplinary entity - a consortia[Latin American Studies program.

The Workshops

The first workshop would be centered on teaching faculty how to incorporate multimedia technology, including web pages and the Internet into their teaching. For example, like the Modern Language workshops, we envision that faculty will be taught how to construct web-pages and how to incorporate information from the Internet and WWW into these pages. What would make this workshop unique would be the focus on constructing products, such as web pages and their contents, which would meet the needs of a wide variety of disciplines that are all focused on the same geo-cultural area. This differs from previous workshops in that these resources or modules will be tailored to the needs of all ACS institutions, with specific curricular goals in mind. In addition to cataloguing individual areas of expertise among faculty, we will also focus on studying how we might produce resources that would bring together the various

areas of expertise on the individual campuses in the area of Latin American Studies. In other words, we believe we can bring together faculty from numerous disciplines both on the individual home campuses and in the consortium as a whole.

The second workshop would be centered on the issue of how multimedia can be used to move these now focused groups of Latin American Studies professors from the campus to the ACS level, and move from sharing a powerful on-line resource center to actually functioning as a single department. Thus, ACS would move from having a number of disparate Latin Americanists to, in essence, having one of the largest undergraduate Latin American Studies Programs in the United States. While the first workshop would focus on such things as setting up home pages and college level web sites, the second workshop would focus on molding these campus entities into a functioning whole that would facilitate faculty and student research and study. Emphasis would be on creating a multi-disciplinary multi-campus on-line "Center" for the study of Latin American Studies, the faculty of which would number in the hundreds. Questions we intend to explore and find solutions to include:

- What is the most effective and realistic way to create such an entity?
- What kinds of governing and administrative structures are required for us to function efficiently as a department?
- Under what circumstances will we employ "distance learning," either synchronous or asynchronous?
- What are the preferred structures, e.g., forums or chat areas, in which faculty and students can easily exchange information and discuss ideas beyond the level of email?

These and other questions would be explored and the results translated into a model that will form a lasting basis for such an entity.

Impact and Continuation of the Collaborative Efforts

Some type of continued effort needs to be associated with the outcome of these workshops if they are to be successful, and there again the workshops would need to be designed to facilitate the development of mechanisms for the continued evolution of the multi-disciplinary, multi-school entity generated. What do the various constituencies envision its potential to be and what should be the long-term goals of such an on-line department? Certain ACS members already have well-defined campus programs in Latin American Studies and faculty from these programs should be valuable resources in considering the benefits and obstacles of constructing a virtual department. A coordinating committee will be formed to oversee the continued development of the ideas and outcomes of the workshops and appoint a coordinator for the virtual department. The results of our collaborations, both immediate and long-term, will provide a unique set of data for studying a number of important educational issues in the area of effectively utilizing college resources both at the campus and consortial level.

Support, Savings and Evaluation for the Two Proposed Departments

Technical Support

Technical support mechanisms vary widely from one ACS member institution to another. However, in contrast to other disciplines, Modern Languages have the advantage of a long history in technology and of having "lab directors," many of them full-time and highly trained in computer methodologies. At least four ACS institutions have Language Learning Center

directors who have been in the field of CALL for many years and are nationally active in it. At least three do national consulting in the field. Hence there is a core group of professional supporters for faculty that can be relied upon for leadership in the initiative. Latin American Studies have a core group of faculty leaders as well, many of whom have become adept at technology through language training.

ACS staff, both at the central office and at the Technology Center, will supplement that core group of technical support. A great deal of mentoring will take place via email and other electronic means. Faculty also will be encouraged to take advantage of regional support groups for CALL (primarily the regional arms of [ALL for the South Central and the Southeast regions).

Projected Savings

Developing focused multimedia requires an intensive expenditure of time and effort. Few institutions are able to provide sufficient release time to faculty for them to develop a critical mass of multimedia materials to be developed which will, in a real sense, impact significantly or change the direction of a program. Faculty members also - in the absence of a visible and well-thought-out initiative - often are unsure that their efforts will "count" towards tenure and promotion, hence there arises an opportunity cost in the form of foregone initiatives which might have enhanced academic programs. A collaborative initiative such as this one will enable faculty to develop significant multimedia resources that would be too costly to develop on an individual institutional basis.

Student costs also will be decreased over time by a movement away from traditional textbooks. Language Lab/Language Learning Center costs will be reduced by ending reliance on commercial products, most of which are unsatisfactory in any case. The same will apply to Latin American Studies. Consortia] initiatives also allow some of the equipment-intensive activities to take place at the central Technology Center and at those institutions which have state-of-the art facilities, while still allowing participation in project design and intellectual content by faculty members at institutions which may lack those facilities on their own campuses. Additional savings will be realized by the decreased need for hiring new faculty, especially short-term replacement faculty, as a result of sharing teaching responsibilities across the consortium.

Evaluation and Dissemination of Results

In the language area, the first modules will go into beta test at member institutions in the Fall of 2000 and, as beta-testing continues, extensive evaluation will be solicited from students and from colleagues willing to use the materials in their own classes. We foresee the first actual on-line courses starting up sometime during the 2000-01 academic year. Comparative studies of member institutions are the subject of focused research and will be written up in appropriate journals (e.g., the IALL Journal, the Calico Journal, or the Modern Language Journal) with multiple authors representing those institutions. Faculty will be encouraged (and supported by their ACS member institutions) to present at national and regional conferences emphasizing CALL. Similar efforts are planned for Latin American Studies.

COOPERATIVE TECHNOLOGY TRAINING

Background: the ACS Technology Center

ACS has recently established a consortial Technology Center, containing a classroom with 24 workstations and a multimedia projection system, which can be divided into two smaller classrooms with separate projection systems, a high-end multimedia development lab, and office space for visiting ACS faculty members and workshop leaders. The Center also houses numerous consortial resources, including ACS web and database servers, and serves as a consortial "help desk" for ACS members involved in educational technology development. We began offering workshops and seminars for ACS faculty and staff on a variety of technology-related topics at the Center in June, 1999, on such topics as "The Worldwide Web for Biologists," "Advanced Multimedia Development for the Classroom" and "Applications of Educational Technologies in the Classroom."

Plan for the Workshops

Through previous consortium efforts and those of individual campuses, the ACS faculties have achieved a high degree of basic technology literacy. However, the ACS recognizes that varying levels of faculty experience and expertise in the use of technology are still a fact of life. Consequently, we plan to offer future faculty and staff workshops at two levels: intermediate and advanced. Furthermore, we plan to hold workshops geared to specific technology applications that are of special interest to faculty. A survey of faculty will identify these applications or programs, so that the workshop will be designed to respond to the specific interests and needs of the faculty. Moreover, it has been our experience that a mixed-discipline environment can be pedagogically beneficial for faculty who may not have an opportunity to learn about teaching methodologies from colleagues outside their department on their own campuses. Because the

Center is dedicated to Consortium activities, we will be able to hold 5-7 day workshops throughout the summer months.

All training efforts will focus on putting technology into a pedagogical perspective, and include hands-on collaborations with peer instructors or mentors and an active follow-up program involving the actual use of technology for teaching. We think that the initial objective of acquainting faculty with the availability and potential of technology has been largely achieved (thanks in great part to previous funding from the Lettie Pate Evans Foundation). The current objective is to enable faculty to put technology to effective pedagogical use in their specific campus environments.

While also serving as a venue for workshops and seminars, the ACS Technology Center will host ACS Technology Fellows, i.e., faculty or staff members on leave who seek a supportive environment for developing pioneering pedagogical or curricular material that will ultimately be shared with the rest of the consortium. These Technology Fellows might include participants in the Modern Language and Latin American Studies virtual departments charged with the development of materials that will be used in online courses or otherwise shared.

We have also begun to create a repository of course materials created by ACS faculty (e.g., by participants in technology workshops) that can be shared with ACS colleagues, thus obviating the need for other faculty members to spend valuable time creating similar resources. In the interest of realizing further efficiencies, we plan to expand this repository and improve the mechanism whereby faculty and students can find materials for specific teaching and learning

needs. Thus, all workshops will focus on the creation of "products" that will be widely useful. Projects for funding will be selected with the explicit goal of shared use in mind, and faculty will be encouraged to pursue projects based on a survey of consortial needs within and across disciplines. The workshops and technology fellowships will therefore ultimately contribute to other ACS efforts to contain costs by putting in place technology-based mechanisms and relationships to enable us to work together as a single organization, with a shared infrastructure and common goals.

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE AND OFFICE SUPPORT

In order to accomplish the above goals, the consortium seeks funding to provide necessary technical assistance for the project. This encompasses use of special expertise, planning and evaluation, and staff and committee travel. Funds are also sought for office expenses, including supplies, equipment, telephone, staff assistance and similar expense items.

CONCLUSION

The ACS proposes a new three-year program for cost-containment, one full of promise for both administrative and academic areas on the consortium's campuses. Through initiatives in combined purchasing of goods and services (including joint licensing and memberships) and administrative benchmarking, the consortium will effect considerable cost control, if not savings, while raising the campus consciousness of this critical issue. In the academic technology area, the institutions will benefit in ways not feasible on an individual basis - through two 'virtual'

departments and coordinated training efforts. Through these efforts, college and university faculty will learn new technology skills for application in and outside of the classroom -while demonstrating the value and cost containment benefits of working together.

Given the potential value of this proposed program to the ACS, and to counterparts around the country, we hope that the Robert W. Woodruff Foundation will deem the proposal worthy of its support.

(woodruff proposal 2/01/00)

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