

THE TEACHING, LEARNING, & TECHNOLOGY ROUNDTABLE

(<http://ncsu.edu/tltr>)

INITIATION OF THE TLT ROUNDTABLE

The Teaching, Learning & Technology Roundtable (TLTR) was initiated in the Fall of 1998, in response to the accelerating pace of technological change on NC State's campus. In 1999, NC State University's Division of Undergraduate Affairs, under the leadership of Vice-Provost James Anderson and Assistant Vice-Provost Jo Allen, became the sponsors of the TLTR, providing for its continuation on campus and its association with the TLT Network with its rich archive of pedagogical and technological resources.



As in academic institutions everywhere, electronic communication networks and instructional software are pervasive at NC State. The trend toward greater development and adoption of technologically facilitated educational practices holds considerable promise. It also yields consequences that are stretching the limits of human and material resources. The gap is widening between expectations for academic use of information technology and resources available to encourage and support faculty efforts. Many faculty members would to or feel pressured to learn new technologies and to find ways to use Web-enhanced tools and online curricula elements in their courses. Technical personnel know how much is required in the way of support and how limited resources are. Students want the best education and easy access to any technology used. Administrators are looking for guidance from those with experience in educational technologies, both in the classroom and in online educational environments.

In efforts to meet these rising demands at NC State, academic disciplines have tended to develop practices and policies in isolation, resulting in increased fragmentation and duplication of efforts. There are many committees and services related to new technologies that operate unknown to the larger campus community. Experimentation is often handled in a piecemeal fashion, and finding ways for others to benefit from those results has been difficult.

THE MISSION OF THE TLT ROUNDTABLE

The Teaching, Learning and Technology Roundtable seeks to address these needs. The Roundtable is based on a model created by the Teaching, Learning, & Technology Group, originally within the American Association of Higher Learning. Roundtables are in operation on over six hundred campuses nationwide. The Roundtable is unique in being composed entirely of volunteers--interested faculty, administrators, students, staff, and technical personnel--who rarely have the opportunity to converse all together. The Roundtable is constructed to serve as an advisory council whose purpose is to provide a forum for deliberations on all issues related to educational technologies. These deliberations are geared toward producing both formal recommendations for higher administrators and educational functions for the larger campus.

In the fall of 1999, the TLTR became engaged with the Provost's request to determine the best course management software system for adoption by NC State. The Learning Technologies Service arranged for several vendors to demonstrate their products, and the Roundtable members constituted a large number of those who evaluated these systems. The question of open source adoption on campus became a part of those deliberations as well. Ultimately, a report was written by members of the TLTR and submitted to the Chancellor, Provost and the heads of Information Technology (IT).

These sessions were often volatile. The views of members were on several occasions directly at odds with others present. Yet, a consensus was finally reached that satisfied the majority. The traditional way of decision-making in the arena of information technology--top down edicts out of hierarchical, appointed committees--was expanded to include the views of those most directly affected. In turn, the Provost and IT administrators have acknowledged with appreciation the constructive role of the Roundtable in a series of decisions that will affect the whole university.

CONITNUING NEED FOR THE ROUNDTABLE

The campus continues to grapple with issues of paramount importance to the whole institution and to faculty in particular. Questions of intellectual property copyright ownership, adequate training for faculty as well as compensations and rewards for the development of technology enhanced courses both in traditional settings and at a distance are pressing. The heads of DELTA (Distance Education and Learning Technologies Applications), LTS (Learning Technology Services), and ITD (Information Technology Division) regularly solicit TLTR sessions to address issues related to pedagogy and technology as they arise. The Roundtable addresses these issues and an array of others in its monthly meetings and when appropriate submits recommendations to the Vice-Provost of DELTA (Distance Education and Learning Technologies Applications) as well as the Provost and other administrators.

The TLTR is also one of the primary sponsors of the Gertrude Cox Award for Innovative Excellence in Teaching with Technology. Open to the entire campus, the Cox award provides peer-reviewed evaluations of all nominations and selects projects that are cited for Meritorious Recognition as well as the Award winner, who travels to Florida for the International Conference on College Teaching and Learning. In addition, the TLTR is centrally involved in the development of LITRE (Learning in a Technology Rich Environment), the SACS Quality Enhancement Plan for NC State. The Roundtable provides a forum for LITRE directors to gain public input, present drafts of plans, and provide updates to the campus at large.

We have found that the Roundtable concept of including everyone on a non-hierarchical level can yield fruitful results. Join us and help shape NC State's future as we explore ways to enhance the teaching and learning mission of the University with the opportunities offered by new educational technologies.

Read an interview with the TLTR's facilitator, Dr. Sarah Stein, discussing TLTR in Connect, or contact her: e-mail: sstein@unity.ncsu.edu; phone: 515-9741; Dept of Communication Winston 201M, Box 8104.