

GRANT PERFORMANCE REPORT

Strengthening Academic Programs Through Faculty Development

E-Portfolio Development and Instruction

ST. THOMAS UNIVERSITY

(In partnership with Miami-Dade Community College, InterAmerican Campus)

Reporting Period: November 2002-April 21, 2003

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II. Executive Summary

The current FY2003 was an essential one for St. Thomas University (STU). After three years of comprehensive internal and external evaluations, the institution successfully passed the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) accreditation. In fact, such accreditation became effective recently on March 18, 2003. In the midst of this ten-year review process, STU and Miami-Dade Community College, InterAmerican Campus (IAC) entered into a five-year partnership to infuse electronic portfolio methodology into five targeted academic areas across institutions. Such collaborative effort was made possible by the approval of this federal grant.

Similarly, the current year was also a critical one for M-DCC where a major institutional restructuring took place, including a college-wide presidential rotation. Understandably, the two events occurring at both institutions simultaneously and framing the initial year of this project have caused some delays. However, significant progress has been made at STU where the preliminary infrastructure necessary to carry out this project was non-existent. Specifically, a top priority at STU, where instructional space is extremely scarce, was to designate an area within the Main Library building to set up the e-portfolio computer laboratory. Gantt charts for the first two quarters of the project (i.e., January through April, and May through August) detail the internal tasks aimed at the creation of that infrastructure (see Appendix A).

Also, from October through December of 2002, key stakeholders at both institutions held initial meetings to: (1) identify and hire additional project staff, (2) disseminate the essence of the grant at both institutions, (3) target areas that needed to be prioritized, and (4) appoint an Activity Task Force (ATF) at both institutions by January of 2003.

A joint STU-IAC meeting took place at STU on December 20, 2002 (see Appendix B). Immediately after that meeting, a 17-member ATF was appointed at STU. Since January 2003 until present, our ATF committee has met monthly, and the fifth ATF meeting is scheduled for May 30, 2003. One of the top priorities of the ATF has been setting up the computer lab within the Main Library building (see Appendix C).

One of the first goals of the ATF was to select a five-member screening committee, whose responsibility was to advertise, interview, and ultimately hire the Technical Support Specialist (TSS) and the Faculty Instructional Technician (FIT). This was a challenging task that took approximately three months. While five applicants expressed interest in the TSS position, it was difficult to meet their salary expectations, which exceeded the salary allocation for this position. To remedy this situation internally using existing resources, permission was granted on March 3, 2003 (see Appendix D) to reallocate funds, so that identified, qualified technicians within the Office of Information Technology (OIT) would oversee the responsibilities of the TSS position. In addition, 12 applicants applied for the FIT position, and after several rounds of in-depth interviews, which included a training demonstration, this position was finally filled during the second week in April of 2003.

Another major goal of the screening committee was to establish the faculty selection criteria and organize a selection process. An application form was created for this purpose (see Appendix E), and six candidates were selected to participate in the first group. In addition, a participating faculty member contract was drawn in order for selected faculty to sign it and commit to it (see Appendix F). The adherence to the parameters and benchmarks set forth in this agreement will be closely monitored by the Activity Director, the Project Director, and ATF members not only to ensure the completion of tasks, but also to keep accurate records of internal accountability.

To conclude, after moving four large book stacks from the Main Library reference area on May 13 and setting up the future computer lab and office areas, measurements were taken to purchase fitting computer stations and chairs. Also, designated OIT technicians and ATF members will be purchasing the necessary hardware to retrofit the lab during the period of May 19-June 20, 2003. It is also anticipated that, once the FIT counterpart is hired at IAC, the e-portfolio software will be acquired jointly no later than the last week in July of 2003. To this effect, the first tier of selected faculty members at STU will assist the FIT and Activity Director in selecting the most appropriate e-portfolio software to meet the academic needs of our student and faculty population. It is also anticipated that by the end of the fall semester 2003 at least six faculty members and approximately 150 undergraduate students (i.e., 25 students in 6 classes) will have completed comprehensive e-portfolio training.

III. Project Status

A. Activity Task Force was established

A 17-member Activity Task Force committee was established in December of 2002 at St. Thomas University (STU). The committee is comprised of key institutional stakeholders (see Appendix A), who have consistently monitored and evaluated tasks for all projects. In December of 2002, a joint meeting was held at STU with our Miami-Dade Community College partners (see Appendix B). Shortly after this initial meeting, a presidential rotation was announced at M-DCC. Given the considerable restructuring and reallocation of personnel at our partnering institution, our joint projected plans have been delayed. However, our ATF has convened every month, and detailed minutes have been archived.

B. New Activity Staff was Recruited and Employed

On March 3, 2003, a redistribution of funds was approved by our Program Officer (with no added costs or changes to the grant's goals and objectives) in order to expedite the project at STU. Such redistribution authorization allowed us to identify specialized technicians within our Office of Information Technology department to provide services specific to the job description of the Technical Support Specialist detailed in the grant. Because the initial projected salary did not seem to match current salary expectations of those applying for this position,

it was necessary (following the recommendations of our ATF) to find this solution within our existing internal structure.

In addition, the Faculty Instructional Technician (FIT) position was advertised both internally and on the web starting in the month of January of 2003. The ATF appointed a five-member screening committee whose members were charged with the responsibilities of advertising the position, screening applicants, organizing a teaching-training demonstration session, and ultimately hiring the FIT. Out of 12 qualified applicants, a final candidate was chosen on April 12, 2003. She will be starting her duties on June 1, 2003.

C. Purchase and Install Equipment for Two Classroom labs

The STU e-portfolio lab will be housed in a prime area within our Main Library building (see Appendix C). It is anticipated that such lab will be operational by June 20, 2003. To free up the space needed to set up the lab, however, it was necessary to move four large library stacks containing reference materials. This move required the use of special equipment, hence the two-month delay. Our ATF designated a five-member team to purchase the 26 Dell computers by the first week in June. During the week of June 23 through the 27, 2003, all equipment will be installed and pilot tested.

With regard to the software, it is anticipated that our ATF, assisted by the newly hired FIT and a designated individual from M-DCC, will make a final decision as to which e-portfolio software to purchase by the first week in July of 2003. Because e-portfolio software is a fairly new product and our M-DCC partners must be part of the selection process, it has been challenging to decide as to which software would be the most fitting to carry out our project successfully.

D. Identify Courses in Academic Programs for Revision and Adaptation to Electronic Portfolio Methodologies

Starting in February of 2003, a faculty selection process (within the five academic areas detailed in the grant) began at STU. Faculty were encouraged to fill out an application (see Appendix E) listing the main responsibilities of participants. Numerous applications were received and, after careful consideration by the ATF screening committee, the best-qualified faculty members have been chosen to commence their training during the week of June 23, 2003. By then, these five faculty members will have identified at least two courses each to be infused with e-portfolio methodologies. In addition, it is expected that our M-DCC counterparts will also have an opportunity to align their equivalent courses with the ones identified by STU no later than July 15, 2003.

E. Train Five STU and Five IAC Faculty in Instructional Methodologies, Teaching in Classrooms/labs and Development of E-Portfolios

As explained in paragraph 3 above, it is projected that the actual faculty training at STU will start after June 20, 2003 once the computer lab is operational. By that date, the FIT will have produced a detailed training module including the methodology, teaching strategies, time lines, assignments, periodic evaluations, and accountability measures as described in faculty contract (see Appendix F).

F. Revision and Adaptation of Identified Courses in Five Academic Programs to E-Portfolio Methodologies

In their monthly performance reports, participating faculty members will provide a detailed (written) report as to the progress made in the infusion of e-portfolio methodologies into their selected courses.

Approved performance requirements (see Appendix F) establish that each faculty member will produce four monthly reports and a final comprehensive report demonstrating effective infusion of e-portfolio into their lessons. In addition, faculty will conduct a symposium presentation to the university community at a designated time. The objective of such presentation is for faculty to demonstrate how students are using e-portfolio methodology to enhance their personal projects, curriculum vitae, academic performance record, and career development planning. These tasks are aligned with STU's Long Range Plan, especially as they relate to students' lifelong learning through the use of technology.

G. Administer Surveys to Collect Baseline Data

By June 30, 2003, the Director of Institutional Research (a member of the ATF) will have designed a comprehensive survey whose main results will serve as baseline data at the start of the project. The same survey will be administered at the end of the first semester of program implementation to compare results and report anticipated significant gains.

This pre and post survey correlation will be conducted every semester throughout the life of the grant in order to monitor the progress of the project and control for accountability consistently.

H. Pilot Test Revised and Adapted Courses

In spite of the inevitable delays detailed above, it is projected that by December of 2003, all selected courses will have been infused with e-portfolio methodologies and pilot-tested successfully. Participating faculty from both sites will show evidence of such integration into their course syllabi.

At STU, a faculty member for each of the five-targeted academic areas (i.e., Accounting-Business, Communication Arts, Psychology, Pre-Law, and Computer Information Systems) has been selected. Each faculty will identify at least two courses in each of their disciplines (e.g., resulting in at least 10 courses) that might be infused with e-portfolio methodology. In addition, STU faculty will work closely with their IAC counterparts (once they are selected) to align the competencies of selected courses. As expected, such course content

alignment is crucial, as it would enhance the transfer rate of students from IAC to STU, especially across the aforementioned areas.

I. Prepare Procedures for Career, Transfer, and Advising Operations

The ATF members will work closely with the Activity Director, the FIT, and the first tier of STU participating faculty during the fall 2003 semester to prepare a procedural document listing specific steps to ensure the career development, transfer rates, and individualized advising of students. Such procedures will be in place by September of 2003 and will be included in the next grant performance report. Point persons will be assigned at STU to ensure that transfer and advising procedures are followed efficaciously. Indeed, the advising and transfer processes will be monitored closely to ensure that students who have successfully completed their e-portfolio requirements are not stopped in the pipeline. The foreseen procedures will require both internal and external support by academic and administrative personnel at both institutions.

Because this is a collaborative grant, all efforts will be made to ensure that the areas of Career Service and Advising at both institutions will utilize the end product; namely the students' e-portfolio, to showcase the academic accomplishments of the learners and guide them in the right direction both academically and professionally. For example, it is predicted that a number of IAC students would be interested in continuing their career at STU's reputable School of Law. Indeed, because Hispanic minorities are underrepresented in legal careers, this would be an important task throughout the project.

IV. Budget Information

While Table 1 shows an actual budget summary for STU, Table 2 summarizes the budget status of the IAC. This budget summary was produced on April 30, 2003. Also, while the allocated budget for STU was \$295,738.00, the IAC was allocated \$299,640.00. As indicated, the only expenditure incurred thus far is \$7,247.31 from the STU's Administrative salary line # 20-41000-212144 to compensate the Activity Director whose salary is paid at 50% by the grant. In addition, the newly hired FIT at STU will start her assignment on June 1, 2003 and funds will be deducted from the Professional-Staff salary line # 20-43000-212144 after that start date.

Taking into account the delays explained both in the Executive Summary (see Section II) and in the Project Status section (see Section III), funds have not been spent at the rate both institutions had initially anticipated due to (1) the major organizational restructuring in the case of IAC where a new president was appointed recently, and (2) the need to create infrastructure (namely identifying and setting up a computer laboratory) and hire qualified staff at STU.

Nonetheless, shortly after this report is submitted on May 23, 2003, it is anticipated that funds will have been spent at a faster rate, especially at STU where operations are expected to start during the week of June 20, 2003. Note that such projections cannot be made for the IAC at this point.

Table 1: Actual Budget Summary for **STU** Title V Cooperative Grant as of 4/30/03

Account Number	Description	(A) Allocated Budget	(B) Actual Budget	(B-A) Available Budget
20-32000-212144	Revenues	295,738.00	7,336.31	288,401.69
20-41000-212144	Administrative Salaries	18,200.00	7,247.31	10,952.69
20-42500-212144	Adjunct Salaries	80,000.00	-	80,000.00
20-43000-212144	Professional Staff Salaries	90,000.00	-	90,000.00
20-48032-212144	University Work Study	8,000.00	-	8,000.00
20-49790-212144	Fringe Benefits	45,168.00	1,180.10	43,987.90
20-50515-212144	Prof. Dev. Travel	2,000.00	-	2,000.00
20-55500-212144	Supplies-Mat Office	50,448.00	89.00	50,359.00
20-58920-212144	Other Operating Exp	1,922.00	-	1,922.00
	Total Expenses	295,738.00	7,336.31	288,401.69

As explained in III.B. above, the only significant modification made to STU's budget was a redistribution of funds approved by our Program Officer on March 3, 2003. This modification, however, did not result in added costs or changes to the grant's goals and objectives. Such redistribution of funds allowed us to expedite the project at STU by relying on the technical support of existing qualified staff within the Office of Information Technology. As a result, OIT agreed to provide the necessary technical support initially assigned to the Technical Support Specialist.

Table 1: Actual Budget Summary for **IAC** Title V Cooperative Grant as of 4/30/03

Account Number	Description	(A) Allocated Budget	(B) Actual Budget	(B-A) Available Budget
20-32000-212145	Revenues	299,640.00	-	299,640.00
20-54090-212145	Expenses	-	-	-

Total Expenses	299,640.00	-	299,640.00
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Anticipated Changes in Operational Budget for Next Budget Period

It is anticipated that funds accrued during the first-year budget period will be used to increase the number of faculty to be trained, especially during the second year of the grant. To accomplish this goal, faculty who were trained during the fall 2003 semester will assist in identifying, nominating, and ultimately training their colleagues during the next training cycle. However, to ensure that trained faculty continue to infuse e-portfolio methodology in their syllabus consistently beyond their training period, classroom observations and peer evaluations will be run periodically throughout the life of the grant.

As set forth in the faculty contract (see Appendix F), participating professors will develop their own professional portfolios, which they can present subsequently when applying for promotion within the institution. Such e-portfolios, for instance, will include samples of faculty scholarly work and evidence of student success in their careers. In addition, the electronic documents will serve as examples to future faculty members and the academic community at large.

V. Supplemental Information

No changes to the performance objectives and activities are expected. In addition, once the computer laboratory becomes operational at STU around June 20, 2003, we anticipate training the first group of participating faculty members who, in turn, will be assisting their IAC counterparts in the selection of the most appropriate e-portfolio software program. To reiterate, the software selection process is an essential step in this project, and it is also contingent on the collaborative participation of IAC faculty.