

21st CENTURY CLASSROOM PROJECT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The College has consistently maintained a focus of quality education and the enhancement of the learning environment. While renovation or construction was taking place continuously on each campus, there was not a comprehensive standard for the entire college. The lack of established minimum standards for learning environments and equipment created several problems, including a) increased purchasing costs, and b) challenges for faculty who taught at different campuses, and had to operate in unequal learning environments with equipment of varying standards.

In 2005, the program review process determined that the learning environments, especially in the Associates in Arts programs, needed to be updated. Through the budgetary review and planning process, the President allocated funds for the 21st Century Classroom project. A multi-disciplinary team was appointed to develop the standards for the project. The committee included faculty, facility planners, audio-visual system experts, and administrators. Furthermore, efforts were made to solicit input from students, staff, faculty, administrators, and consultants. The committee's charge was to create college-wide standards for the classroom/teaching environments. These standards were expected to foster current and future innovation in teaching and learning. In addition, the committee was to coordinate the purchase of classroom equipment in 2005-2006 to commence the project.

Committee activities in facilitating the project included a) an assessment of current learning/teaching facilities (the Committee identified 324 learning spaces across the college, of which 170 are classrooms), b) review of literature on space, design, and technology, c) college site visits, d) coordination of a showcase of the latest classroom furniture. This report is to communicate the result of the Committee's activities, and to provide guidance in the implementation of the 21st Century Classroom project.

Objectives

In developing the learning environment standards the committee established the following objectives for the 21st Century Classroom Project:

- Provide space for innovative and collaborative learning
- Improve classroom appearance;
- Provide comfortable student seating;
- Increase flexibility of classroom space;
- Develop spaces for interactive learning;
- Improve classroom infrastructure;
- Improve access
- Improve audio and video facilities.

Campus Assessments

Using a common template, representatives from each campus were asked to compile information on the current status of classrooms at their campus. The template categories included environmental factors (e.g. number of desks, chairs, white board, black board, etc.) as well as technological factors (e.g. internet connection, overhead projector, DVD, etc.).

Each campus was also asked to formulate a list of expectations for the 21st Century Classroom. Campus representatives had the opportunity to present and discuss their campus' expectations in a committee meeting. Through this process the tiered classroom standard with increasing levels of technological sophistication was recommended. Additionally, effective support, training, and maintenance practices were deemed critical. Above all, the goals of the institution, especially in regard to producing students equipped to become valuable members of the economic community, were expected to be consistently interwoven into all efforts to improve the learning environments across the college.

Pedagogical Implications

Today's faculty is instructing students with skills, attitudes, and expectations far different from those of decades ago. The emergence of new technologies challenges educators to develop new approaches in applying instructional technology resources to improve teaching and learning. Students encountering 21st century technology learning experiences in the K-12 sector will expect to advance their knowledge in post-secondary institutions. Faculty's lack of ability to operate instructional technology or to master software programs, limits the engagement of students in a way that is meaningful and relative to workplace needs and expectations. Integrating technological tools into classroom pedagogy and the curriculum is becoming an inseparable part of good teaching. More than a decade ago scholars posited that technology integration is concerned with more than helping faculty operate machines. Professional development should not only advocate technology integration, but underscore for faculty how technology provides tools, resources, and contexts for differentiated instruction that expands students' abilities to become active learners, able to connect with complex subject matter and to transfer what they have learned to new problems and contexts.

21st Century Classroom Standard

- Furnishings for Student Stations
 - Tables
 - Foldaway
 - Roman II
 - Chairs
 - With Arms
 - Without Arms
- Furnishing for Faculty Stations
 - Faculty Stations with technological capabilities to support:
 - Computer
 - Document Camera
 - Projector
- Physical Appearance of Classroom
 - Standard color palettes
 - Internet Access for each classroom
- Standard Technological Instrumentalities

Project Recommendations

The College will adopt a tier system approach to setting and maintaining 21st century classroom standards. The goal is for each classroom and/or lab across the college to have the same standards and equipment based on the tier system. The three levels in the tier system are classrooms, labs, and classrooms with labs. Based on identified needs and activities typically conducted in classrooms and labs, minimum standards were established for furniture, equipment, and infrastructure that are conducive to a positive teaching/learning environment. The project will address classrooms in its first year of implementation. Labs and the classrooms with labs will be attended to in the years to follow.

An advantage of the tiered system is consistency across the College. Faculty is able to teach at any campus and experience familiarity with materials and equipment. Cost-effectiveness is achieved, with the entire college purchasing the same equipment, rather than single site purchases.

Based on the project research and review process, the Committee makes the following project recommendations:

- The classrooms are to be refreshed every 5-7 years;
- The 21st Century Classroom must be funded in order to ensure a 5-7 year refresh cycle;
- Standards will be reviewed every 5 years;
- Annual reviews are necessary to determine whether the standard has been adhered to and to report on progress, change, or innovation, with potential recommendations for refresh, replacement, or maintenance;
- A point person from each campus will work with College coordinators to facilitate maintenance, refresh, and adherence to the standards for new construction, remodeling and renovation. Facility managers at each campus are recommended to be on the campus team;
- A project coordinator is to be appointed to work with the point persons of each campus or the facilities managers for the first 3 years of the project; and
- Faculty development needs assessment, initial and ongoing training and support staff and mechanisms in order to sustain momentum and enthusiasm.