APPLICATION COVER SHEET

BLENDED LEARNING GRANT

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SED200 BLENDED LEARNING GRANT

ABSTRACT

This blended leaning course has three components. The first is *enquiry lectures* which provide topic information in a format which facilitates student’s independent research and reflection time. The second is *structured independent research* which is guided by a workbook. The third are *student led discussion groups* centering on activities such as debates, case studies, problem-based learning and the exploration of community based resources. The student’s progress is monitored with formative assessments by using the Turning Point clickers and a workbook page which allows students to check off learning outcomes that have been mastered. The summative evaluation is comprised of a collaborative wiki that showcases student’s projects throughout the course and a final exam. The F2F sessions of the course will be delivered in a co-teaching model. Details of the course development and evaluation will be made available to the SAU faculty through a public blog. There will be two presentations made to the faculty through the Office of Assistive Technology lecture series.
INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this proposal is to request funding to convert a face to face (F2F) course into a blended learning course. Introduction to Special Education (SED200) was selected because the delivery mechanisms of a blended learning course will provide a greater opportunity for students to discover community resources for special needs students, engage in peer discussions and deepen personal reflection on how this profession will affect the learner. The F2F component will take place in a co-teaching format. The purpose of this is to provide effective co-teaching models for pre-service teachers who are expected to go into the field and co-teach effectively.

BLENDING LEARNING DESIGN COMPONENTS

SED200 INTRODUCTION TO SPECIAL EDUCATION

SED200 is the first course in the special education sequence. This course is critical in shaping the learner’s aptitude and attitude in working directly with students who face academic, behavioral, and social challenges. Typically there is one section of this course that is taught in both the fall and winter semesters. There are approximately 20 students in each section. A syllabus of the F2F course is attached in appendix A.

DELIVERY ADAPTATIONS

There are fifteen weeks of instruction in a typical F2F course. For this blended learning delivery adaptation, there will be 7 F2F sessions, 4 student led discussion group sessions and 4 week sessions of independent study (see schedule Appendix B). The F2F session lectures will be enquiry-based lectures where the essential components of each disability studied will be presented with a focus on enabling students to understand how they need to construct their own research in order to facilitate their understanding of the topic. During the enquiry lectures, students will use Turning Point clickers to answer a number of applied questions regarding disabilities. Since this format provides immediate feedback, the student will use it as a formative assessment to determine if they have mastered course outcomes.

The second component of the delivery adaptations will be structured independent research on various disability areas. Research methodology will be explored during the enquiry lectures. Students will use a range of techniques to acquire the knowledge to participate in the group reflection sessions and to pass a summary examination. Students will use, find and share learning activities such as; chapter summaries, webquests, structured interviews, media (Youtube videos, movies, podcasts, etc), websites and more to expand their knowledge base and to assure they are meeting course objectives. They will answer a series of workbook activities designed to summarize their learning.

The third component of the delivery adaptations will be 4 group reflection sessions. There are 16 disability areas that are studied for this course. These will be broken down into 4 segments with 4 disability areas studied in each segment. The learner will explore special education areas in a peer lead discussion group in each of the following four frameworks; 1) debates on critical issues, 2) examination of web resources, 3) community resources and parent support and 4) problem based examples and/or case studies. Along with the activities, students will discuss the summaries of their independent research and
challenge each other in demonstrating that they have acquired enough knowledge to show mastery of the outcomes.

After the fourth enquiry-based lecture, there will be three remaining F2F sessions. These sessions will be used for student presentations and a large group discussion on a wiki (an authentic assessment measure), their parent interview and independent research on each of the disability areas. These discussions and various activities will help to prepare them for the final F2F session which will be a summary evaluation.

The F2F sections of the course will be taught in a co-teaching format to model effective co-teaching strategies.

PEDAGOGIC BASED INSTRUCTIONAL INNOVATIONS

A wide range of instructional innovations will be part of this blended learning design. The course design is focused on constructivism which acknowledges that students bring their own personal history and prior knowledge to the learning process so that learning is ‘emergent’ rather than ‘given’ or ‘discoverable’ (Vygotsky & Cole, 1978). A wiki will be used for each discussion group to create a collaborative area to showcase their knowledge of disability areas along with media such as websites, videos and podcasts that support it. Using this kind of technology enhances student learning (Garrison and Anderson (2003). Students will examine case studies related to various disabilities and provide solutions that they will have to defend in front of their peers. A case study will be posted on the discussion group wiki. Students will use Turning Point Clickers as a formative assessment measure. Enquiry-based lectures will be utilized to help students structure their research to make sure it is preparing them for a summary evaluation of the learning outcomes. Debates will be incorporated to create opportunities for students to defend positions they develop based upon careful reflection of critical issues in each disability area. Cooperative learning with their classmates in peer led discussion and reflection groups will take place in the discussion groups because it is understood that learning takes place in a social context (Goodman, Lillis, Maybin & Mercer, 2003). Critical examination of community resources and web resources are part of the course design to expand upon the concepts presented in the textbook and to add an authentic dimension to their learning. Students will be given a course workbook that indicates the learning outcomes that need to be mastered, a structured process for the discussion group activities, the requirements for the discussion group wiki, procedures for the parent interview and a place to lists notes for preparation for the summary evaluation.

The F2F delivery component will model effective co-teaching which is becoming a significant part of the special education teachers experience in the field as school districts are moving toward a full inclusion model with general education and special education teachers working together. The significant problem that exists in schools based upon my observations as a university supervisor and data in the field (Friend & Cook, 2010) is that teachers are not using effective co-teaching models. “In schools across the country, we have found a disturbing number of educators who call their arrangement "co-teaching" simply because it involves two educators in a classroom at the same time. In some situations, the general education teacher conducts lessons as though alone in the classroom. That teacher may even express gratitude for having in the classroom "an extra set of hands." The second teacher, usually a special educator or specialist, has the de facto role of instructional assistant for students with disabilities and possibly for other students with special needs.” (Friend & Cook, 2010). I would hypothesis that this problem is do to the fact that students do not observe effective co-teaching models in their coursework.
DELIVERY MECHANISM THAT CAN BE SHARED WITH OTHER INSTRUCTORS

One of the main purposes of this grant was to create a blended learning course that could be used as a model for other faculty. It is essential that any design have an effective mechanism to showcase the steps and procedures that are involved in designing and implementing a blended learning course. An historical area with an archival capability would benefit faculty as a valuable resource in designing coursework.

The primary method of information exchange for this proposal would be through a WordPress Blog. Spring Arbor University technology services will be contacted to provide a hosting site for the blog. The blog will be updated weekly indicating the steps that are being taken to complete the blended learning course. The blog will provide places where faculty can comment on the process. The site will be fully archival allowing faculty at anytime to view course development by topic.

Office of Assistive Technology (OAT) has a buck lunch presentation format where faculty can get a lunch for a buck and listen to a presentation. I would propose two presentations. The first presentation should be on the design process, showcasing the challenges of the design. The second presentation would be on the evaluation data that was collected.

A blended learning course design area needs to be created on the SAU hard drive where all faculty have access. All supporting documents that were created as part of this process will be made available to the faculty on this site.

SPECIFIC TYPES OF ASSISTANCE NEEDED

The primary support needed from SAU would be hosting space for the WordPress Blog. Having some funding available for textbooks on blending learning design, conferences and/or course work would be helpful.

PROJECT TIMELINE

This proposal will begin upon approval. The F2F version of SED200 will be conducted as usual in the fall of 2010. The blended learning version of the course will take place in the spring of 2011. The WordPress Blog will need to start as soon as the proposal is accepted. The buck lunch presentations could be given in February 2011 (The development of a blended learning course presentation) and May 2011 (The evaluation of the blended learning course presentation).

PRIOR EVIDENCE OF YOUR DEMONSTRATED COMMITMENT TO CREATIVE TEACHING PEDAGOGIES

I have always been interested in incorporating new and proven teaching strategies and technologies in my instruction. For my online course work, I have used discussion board, wiki’s, blogs, podcasts, videos, Turning Point Clickers, Prezi’s, PowerPoint Presentations online evaluations and more.

My grading practices have been highly influenced by the meta-research from Dr. Robert Marzano that evaluates learning as advanced, proficient, basic and below basic (Marzano, 2009). I have converted rubrics for assignment evaluation into a 4 point scale based upon his suggested design framework.

MEETING THE GRANT GOALS
The first grant goal is to create an effective blended course design that incorporates the SAU Concept. Faith reflection is an integral part of any course at Spring Arbor University, that examines how we treat those among us who are less fortunate and need assistance and accommodations. Workbook and discussion group activities will be carefully designed to examine how the learner’s faith practice would impact their treatment of others. Students will be encouraged to express their faith as one measure of how they would provide care for the treatment of individuals with disabilities.

The second grant goal is learning outcomes assessment that have always been a part of SED200. In this blended learning course, students take more responsibility for their own learning. Therefore, it is essential that students are provided a list of the learning outcomes with a checklist of activities that will indicate mastery of each outcome. Students will check off an outcome as they receive validation through a formative/summative assessment or through peer confirmation. The discussion group wiki and the parent interview will serve as two authentic assessment tools to indicate that some learning outcomes were met. Finally a common summative assessment will be created to use in both versions of the course to demonstrate that learning outcomes have been met.

The third grant goal is the development of a mechanism to share this work with the faculty. The will be done through a WordPress blog, a couple of OAT buck lunch presentations and an area on the SAU server where all faculty will have access to Word documents that have been created.

**SELECTION CRITERIA**

**PROJECT IMPACT**

The rational for the design change from a F2F course to a blended learning course is that there will be improved learning outcomes and greater learner satisfaction. By using an enquiry-based lecture, students will have an opportunity to learn about different study strategies and decide on which one would best fit their learning style. Students will have ongoing formative assessments to track their progress on learning objectives. There are numerous collaborative opportunities for students in a structured group discussion format during this course as well.

The WordPress Blog on blended learning and the buck lunch presentations will provide a low cost professional development process for other faculty who are interested in doing a blended learning course. Shared documents resulting from this course construction will reduce faculty development time when new blended learning course need to be designed.

**PROJECT UNIQUENESS**

Student’s often complain that online learning is unstructured and requires learning to be student directed. There is also the complaint that F2F courses are too theoretical and that learning by lecture can be boring and unmotivating. In this blended learning design, there are structured mechanisms to support student directed learning every step of the way. The enquiry-based lectures gives students methodology to frame their research and independent study so they can maximize their understanding and reflection toward meeting course outcomes. The workbook organizes and provides structure to the group discussion activities. The wiki is structured so students can organize their learning. There is independent study, small group and whole group reflection time to validate ones learning journey.
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This design has numerous formative, authentic and summative assessments to guide and confirm student learning. The Turning Point Clickers give students immediate feedback. The comments on the wiki pages provide peer and instructor feedback. Peer feedback sheets will be part of the discussion group activities. The student’s provided checklist for outcome acquisition along with formative assessment scores will provide early and continuous feedback on how students are progressing in the course.

PROJECT FEASIBILITY

It will take time to set up the WordPress Blog, create the enquiry-based lectures, design the discussion group activities, create the workbook and develop the assessments. I do have a reduced fall course load and this would facilitate the time to design the course. The other element that will make this development more feasible is that I am familiar with the technologies that will be used in this course development.

APPLICANTS QUALIFICATIONS

I have 32 years of service in a K-12 setting dealing with the content of special education. I have now worked for four years in a higher education setting creating, modifying and delivering six different courses. I have written a grant proposal and helped in the design of ten graduate courses in special education. I have been a university supervisor, evaluating student teachers in the field.

I have used many technologies such as Blackboard, wiki’s, discussion board, blogs, Elluminate Live, Skype, Prezi’s, podcasts, Google docs, and other Web 2.0 tools in my classroom. I have created my own podcast lectures for my online courses.

I have done extensive work utilizing Dr. Marzano’s grading research.

PROJECT EVALUATION

Since this is a pilot course design, there needs to be a more extensive evaluation process than the typical SAU course evaluation. Dr. Charles Dziuban from the University of Central Florida has been designing and evaluating blended learning courses for years. He has been a major researcher and presenter on this topic. He addressed the SAU technology committee to give input on how to develop and evaluate course work. He has offered to do a data analysis on blended learning course evaluations. Dr. Dziuban and I have set aside time to discuss evaluation tools and a mechanism to generate meaningful data on this course evaluation.

Along with this formal evaluation process, there will be a number of other measures that will provide data on course effectiveness. There will be ongoing formative assessment data. Students will produce a wiki showcasing authentic learning. Students will have a workbook that will serve as a portfolio to provide a visual scrapbook of student learning.

CONCLUSION

The essential elements of this proposal are to create a highly effective blended learning course with a strong orientation toward the SAU concept, to provide a structure where other SAU faculty can gain information to create their own blended learning course and to provide a mechanism where students will gain academic competencies in a format with high student satisfaction. This blended learning design will provide a greater opportunity for students to discover community resources for special needs students, engage in peer discussions and deepen personal reflection on how this profession will affect the learner.


