

Proposal: Educational Technology Teaching Assistant (ETTA) Program (23 May 2007)

ABSTRACT

This proposal from CCFIT's Educational Technology (EdTech) Subcommittee is designed to enhance faculty support for instructional technologies suited to the distinctive needs of departments and disciplines. The proposal rests on the work of graduate students appointed by a participating department (or group of departments) as lead Teaching Assistants with cross-course responsibilities for instructional technology. The work of the Educational Technology Teaching Assistant's (ETTA's) would be guided at the departmental level by a faculty mentor who would also serve as a departmental liaison for campus deliberations about educational technology. ETTA's would be trained and supported by staff from the Teaching Resources Center and IET and through peer coaching provisions similar to those developed for the ET Partners program. The ETTA Program would simultaneously serve faculty and departmental interests and also provide valuable professional development opportunities for UCD graduate students.

PROBLEMS ADDRESSED

As technology tools, electronic communication and academic applications (e.g. including campus-wide Learning Management Systems) have become increasingly important to teaching and learning, UCD faculty and staff have requested more varied forms of instructional technology assistance (see LEAD II Report). Some of this interest has been stimulated by a campus-wide transition from the MyUCDavis Course Management System (CMS) to SmartSite and a cluster of new technology tools. It also reflects an increasing awareness of technical possibilities for enhancing or evaluating instruction, including a combination of dismay and fascination with everyday technologies through which people manage information, communications and relationships.

Campus-wide Services: In response to these evolving interests, IET and the TRC have increased the number, range and scope of faculty development workshops, and the IT Help desk has refined and expanded its direct and referral services. The Teaching Resources Center's workshop program and Summer Institute on Teaching have also been extended into new formats and teaching-technology topics, and the ET Partners program has been reconfigured to provide more campus-wide assistance and technology tutorials. These adjustments have enriched substantially the opportunities for individual faculty members to learn about technology tools that can enhance their own teaching, but they fall short of addressing the specialized needs of academic departments and programs.

Departmental and Disciplinary Needs: In response to the circumstances noted above, faculty members themselves have requested additional assistance with instructional technology at the level of their own department, discipline and college (see LEAD II report). Department chairs and deans have also expressed interest in instructional technology applications that are not easily accommodated by existing campus-wide services. Some features of departmental assistance have been enhanced through the Technology Support Program, but this program is oriented primarily towards hardware challenges, not the kinds of software applications that shape many teaching applications. For all these reasons, faculty members, staff and administrators, including the Campus Council for Information and Technology (CCFIT), have been eager to identify forms of instructional technology support that can be tailored to the distinctive needs, priorities and circumstances of faculty from a department or departmental cluster.

COMPONENTS OF THIS PROPOSAL

As one response to the concerns and suggestions noted above, the EdTech Subcommittee has proposed a program of department-based, instructional technology support that includes three key components:

- (1) Educational Technology Teaching Assistants, or ETTA's. Graduate students from participating departments will be appointed as ETTA's to assist faculty members in implementing and assessing

instructional technology at the department level. Support for ETTA will come from within the TA provisions currently allocated to departments and colleges, but ETTA's will work on instructional technology issues across the full complement of a department's courses. ETTA's could be appointed by a single department to serve the needs of that department alone or appointed by a cluster of departments to serve instructional technology needs of the cluster.

- (2) **Instructional Technology Faculty Liaisons:** A faculty member will be identified in each participating department who can serve as an Instructional Technology Faculty Liaison and mentor ETTA's in addressing teaching concerns of their departmental colleagues. The faculty member should be thoughtful about teaching challenges and opportunities but need not be an expert in instructional technology. Faculty mentors will focus on helping ETTA's identify and support teaching interests and concerns of departmental faculty members, not on technology per se. The ETTA's would receive technical assistance from the TRC, IET and other ETTA's in selecting appropriate applications and in designing instructional solutions that respond to faculty teaching interests and concerns.
- (3) **Educational Technology Teaching Assistant Training Program (ETTATP):** A structured program of ETTA training, support and problem-solving would be established by the Teaching Resources Center and IET Mediaworks and Classroom Technology Services.

ACTIVITIES AND ROLES

ETTA Training: Graduate students selected as ETTA's will receive training, orientation and support from the TRC and MW in several core IT applications, including tools linked to SmartSite, multi-media presentation, digital archiving, and on-line networking/communication. ETTA's will also participate in a cohort-based program of professional development and problem-solving. Key elements of this program will include: a two week summer orientation session, one week of which will overlap with the Summer Institute on Technology and Teaching; a weekly practicum facilitated by TRC and MW staff; and ongoing consultation with a TRC/IET mentor. These elements will be articulated as an individualized program of professional development that can augment each ETTA's expertise to match instructional technology challenges of their home department.

ETTA Responsibilities: ETTA's would serve their home departments through activities such as the following:

- Consulting with individual faculty members on an as needed basis in applying technology tools to the design and conduct of their courses (e.g. helping faculty members prepare technology support for in-class lectures and presentations, creating grade-books and other evaluation tools, setting up online discussions and forums).
- Assisting faculty committees and workgroups in designing department-wide applications of instructional technology (e.g., course evaluation templates, online teaching archives and databases, course web sites, student portfolios, advising and orientation support, TA teaching development, etc.).
- Offering departmental workshops on their own, or in consultation with other ETTA's and/or TRC and IET staff.
- Helping departments and colleges to evaluate the effectiveness of different IT applications in enhancing student engagement and learning.
- Preparing guidelines and training materials that tailor IT applications to distinctive instructional challenges of their home discipline.

RESOURCE NEEDS AND OPPORTUNITIES

The primary costs of the proposed ETТА Program include salaries for participating TA's and ETТА training expenses incurred by the TRC and IET. To support ETТА positions during the academic year, departments and colleges are encouraged to tap into existing TA provisions, especially when an ETТА would be providing centralized departmental support for services that are currently distributed among multiple TA's. To support pilot administration of an ETТА program, departments could also pursue funding from other campus sources, as this might be appropriate in connection with a UIIP Minigrant or TA development grant. Allied departments are also encouraged to consider ways in which they can pool TA resources to create a shared ETТА position that could serve faculty in a departmental cluster. Salary support for the two weeks of summer participation by ETТА's will be provided in the form of a stipend provided by the TRC and IET.

APPLICATION PROCEDURES

For 2007-08, the proposed program will support a maximum of 8 ETТА's. Departments interested in recommending a graduate student for appointment as an ETТА should submit an application to a joint TRC/IET review committee. All applications should include the following:

- A letter from the department chair or dean recommending a graduate student for the ETТА position and confirming commitment of a 25- 50% time TA position to support this appointment during F, W and S of 2007-08 plus the required 2 week training period, Summer, 2007.
- The identification of a faculty member as a ETТА mentor and Educational Technology Faculty Liaison.
- A brief list of instructional technology challenges facing the department/college that the ETТА will be expected to help address.

Note: Applications will only be accepted from department chairs and deans.

Attachments: [to be developed prior to campus distribution]

- A: ETТА job announcement template
- B: Sample list of departmental projects that could be supported by ETТА's.
- C: List of related campus funding opportunities that could be used in connection with an ETТА to serve departmental teaching interests (e.g. UIIP, TA Development, IUC, etc.).
- D: Application Form