Adjunct Faculty: In the Loop

A Nomination for the Innovation of the Year Program, 2003

A Description of the Innovation   The Team   Executive Summary

Although Glendale Community College and at least one other campus have published web sites in previous years that were specifically geared to help their adjunct faculty members, GCC has finally designed a set of on-line references that broadly encompasses everything new and returning adjunct faculty members need to know to prepare for that challenging, confusing first week of classes and for the semester to come. *Adjunct Faculty: In the Loop* blends elements of a new employee orientation with information that is uniquely crucial to faculty, and especially specific to adjunct faculty. In other words, the aim of the project is to help each member of this large and valued body of employees feel "in the loop" by the time he or she calls role in the first class meeting.

The key ingredient of *Adjunct Faculty: In the Loop* is the new web site published at http://www.gc.maricopa.edu/adjunct/. A committee consisting of a senior associate dean, residential and adjunct faculty members, and information services personnel teamed to design and build this resource of over 120 new pages with content driven by fellow administrators, instructors, technicians, and service employees.

The web site is just an arc of the whole communication loop spurred by this project. It has been integrated with important information on hundreds of web pages published by other college departments and teams, such as the contents of the new on-line Faculty and Staff Handbook and Student Handbook. The web resource was also designed to coordinate with live presentations provided to hundreds of adjunct faculty in a series of orientation programs involving a broad cross-section of representatives of the campus, from the President of the college to Enrollment Services to the campus Faculty Senate, to make adjunct faculty feel "in the loop" at the start of the Spring 2003 semester. The web site also incorporates the on-line copies of adjunct faculty newsletters now in circulation, coordinated by campus adjunct faculty representatives, and will soon link adjunct faculty to a new on-line discussion group for additional support.

Unlike a flat paper manual, or even a typical web site, *Adjunct Faculty: In the Loop* is a community-driven, perpetual work-in-progress geared for constant growth and continuous improvement. The web site is driven by GCC's own WebScribe program, an original system for web content management that allows for multiple authors to manage the site with automatically updated navigational and indexing features to maximize user friendliness for the target audience.

This program has had a positive impact on the education of students according to the following criteria, relating to the Values, Mission, Vision, and Goals of Maricopa Community Colleges:

- **Quality** (*Value Education*): The project gives adjunct faculty a huge head start with all the preliminary and official requirements of their jobs, plus all the help they can use in syllabus development, classroom orientation and procedures, and GCC's extensive computer resources.

- **Efficiency** (*Value Responsibility*): Adjunct faculty members used to begin their jobs somewhat isolated and overwhelmed, acclimating to the complexities of campus life with a time-consuming learning curve. Now, they are invited "In the Loop" to immediately find out what to know, who to contact, and what resources are available to them out there, all roughly

in priority order!

- **Effectiveness** (*Value Responsibility*): Adjunct faculty number hundreds of college employees every semester, the great majority of instructors on campus. Streamlining and disseminating a variety of documents and instructions needed by this workforce is a crucial improvement over the extra footwork and phone tag of the past.

- **Learning** (*Value Students*): Most importantly, the project helps faculty to focus on teaching and class preparation more than administrative duties, orientation, etc. by saving startup time and by providing a central resource for ongoing needs — forms, contact lists, etc. — throughout the semester.

- **Creativity** (*Value Excellence*): The web site and orientation programs are new to the campus and new to adjunct faculty, and they are presented with all-original artwork, illustrations, photography, and web programming.

- **Timeliness** (*Value Excellence*): While the development of *Adjunct Faculty: In the Loop* has occurred only within the last year, the response has been immediate; web server statistics recorded **over 300** individual users of the web site within its first few weeks of publication! In addition, the dynamic design of the web site and other components of *Adjunct Faculty: In the Loop* are specifically geared to accommodate up-to-date changes from a wide variety of information sources, without the lag time inherent to most forms of publication both on-line and in print.

- **Collaboration** (*Value Excellence*): From its inception, *Adjunct Faculty: In the Loop* has depended upon collaboration and feedback from numerous departments, and has been assembled and composed by a team representing a cross-section of the GCC campus.

- **Replication** (*Value Excellence*): In concept, *Adjunct Faculty: In the Loop* can and should be imitated on other campuses. Technically, the WebScribe support of the web site, created with Microsoft Access database files and scripts written in the ColdFusion language, is also compatible with most campus web servers.

The benefits of *Adjunct Faculty: In the Loop* extend beyond the Innovation of the Year criteria. The program exemplifies and promotes:

- Maricopa's **Value of Freedom**, **Value of Fairness**, and **Value of Employees** with its focus of attention upon a large and valuable segment of the Maricopa workforce that was formerly underrepresented and underserved, and

- Maricopa's **Vision** of **continuous quality improvement** through its focus upon encouraging, promoting, and extending the excellence of instruction with a frequently updated, dynamic web resource and commitment to ongoing support for adjunct faculty.