

Joint Meeting

UNC Teaching and Learning with Technology Collaborative Board

UNC Alliance for Shared Services Board

November 29, 2000, 3-5pm
General Administration Board Room

The TLT Collaborative and the UNC Alliance for Shared Services are strategic components of the IT Strategy implementation, created to serve the sixteen campuses. As such the two initiatives face many similar issues and challenges, and there may be significant potential for cooperation as each organization evolves. This special session of the two Boards is intended to facilitate some initial discussion and identification of areas for cooperation, collaboration and ongoing communications.

Agenda

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| 3:05 – 3:15 | Introduction and context-setting, Robyn Render |
| 3:15 – 3:30 | Overview of TLTC, Mike O’Kane |
| 3:30 – 3:45 | Overview of Alliance, Jo Ann Pearson |
| 3:45 – 4:30 | General Discussion |
| 4:30 – 5pm | Conclusions, next steps |

Introduction

The TLT Collaborative and the Alliance have tremendous potential to work together in order to provide common and consistent services that help all UNC campuses achieve excellence in the use of technology for teaching and learning. As we move forward, we anticipate increasing connection between TLT-related initiatives and the Alliance and we intend to work together by sharing tools and technical staff to deliver services to the campuses where appropriate. The TLT Collaborative provides a vehicle for communications, research, and the development of common services and best practices for teaching and learning. The Alliance provides the mechanism for implementing shared operational services that arise from these collaborative efforts. Examples are:

- Online course development. The TLT Collaborative will help to identify best practices and design standards, and can evaluate technologies in terms of teaching and learning. The Alliance can in turn provide common procurement, or possibly common hosting/delivery of course management software and associated development tools, if campuses wish to leverage their resources in this manner.
- Communications portals. As the TLT Collaborative works with campus TLT initiatives to build communications and develop common professional development resources and best practices, the Alliance may provide the backend server infrastructure for these new community-based portals.

- Multimedia databases/delivery systems. The convergence of video and Internet technologies provides new opportunities for sharing high bandwidth; high speed servers that will allow all of our campuses to deliver similar quality of service at the most equitable cost. The Alliance provides the organizational structure to provide operational management for these services (possibly outsourcing), working closely with the TLT Collaborative, UNC Libraries, NCREN and UNC TV.
- Classroom technologies. The TLT Collaborative and Alliance can collaborate in assessment and deployment of classroom technologies (presentation equipment, assistive technologies, wireless/hand-held technologies, training/support, etc) with view to common standards, procurement savings, resource-sharing, etc.
- Other joint initiative might be based around campus interests in cooperating around directory/authentication services, or common server hosting for database development, common application delivery, etc.

Online Course Management systems

- Vendors (Blackboard, WebCT, etc) are interested in discussing licensing agreements across multiple campuses.
- Some campuses may be interested in exploring common hosting or management services around course management.
- The Collaborative has funded a Strategic Online Learning Infrastructure Development (SOLID) project to explore emerging issues/products, national studies, and best practices around course management to assist campus-decision-making and strategic planning in this area. Focus is on pedagogical value, course- and course-content-sharing, ease-of-use, etc. For example there is increasing recognition of the need for cooperation around content-sharing and common courses, and of regional cooperative opportunities issues emerging from SREB.

There appears to be increasing interest among campuses to collaborate at least to some extent in this area, ranging from leveraging procurement, to common hosting/delivery, faculty training, evaluation and decision-making, etc. Right now there are no good mechanisms for campuses to work together on these levels. A possible model is for the TLTC to focus on quality assessment of effective technologies for teaching and learning, while the Alliance focuses on effective deployment of services among participating campuses.

Common Applications Development Services/Portal Development

The Prospective Student Portal provides a compelling model for increased cooperation among interested campuses in a shared development effort for common applications development. There is also increasing need for online Web/database applications that cross campus boundaries to connect professional communities throughout UNC to enable knowledge-sharing, online project management/reporting, effective communications and

decision-processes. Yet much Web/database development remains fragmented and isolated. Many campuses are hurting from the lack of resources for effective application development, at a time when Web/database applications are increasingly critical for both inter- and intra-campus applications. Outside of existing support on each campus for more traditional administrative applications, development tends to suffer from:

<i>Lack of common development or delivery standards</i>	<i>Cost containment</i>
<i>Effective prioritization</i>	<i>Staff turnover</i>
<i>Lack of collaboration among campuses</i>	<i>Project management</i>
<i>Insufficient hosting resources (staff, hardware, software)</i>	<i>Available skill sets</i>
<i>Inconsistent quality of deliverables</i>	<i>Poor maintenance</i>

The UNC Teaching and Learning with Technology Collaborative is currently developing a Web/database infrastructure for implementation of a UNC TLT Portal that includes:

- Knowledge database applications to manage and publish: Events and Conferences, People, Centers and Organizations, Best Practices, Policies and Procedures, Programs and Projects, Community of Interest, Reports and Publications, Procurement Guides, Funding Resources, Tools and Technologies, Tutorials and Online Guides.
- Common tools for communities of interest (Web forums, chat/whiteboard, listservs, common libraries, etc).
- Online project management, tracking and reporting applications.
- UNC-wide people/skills lookups.
- Common tools such as automated survey generators, etc.
- Common authoring environment that makes it easy for not-technical users to manage and approve online content.

This development effort clearly has the potential to serve additional audiences by providing a generic portal infrastructure that can be quickly customized for a wide range of audiences.

This effort could be transitioned into an Alliance-based Common Applications Development Service, where a development group delivers a well-defined range of development services, based on common architecture and standards, and a suite of common applications. Projects would be defined and prioritized through collaborative structures such as the TLT Collaborative and Alliance. The development group would consist of project managers and application designers, and an effective combination of permanent and contract developers, for example:

The development unit is led by a Coordinator (EPA), who: provides the interface between the technical team and client communities; ensures that campus priorities are understood and met; develops overall needs specifications and design requirements; provides reporting and overall management services; oversees the work of the Technical Services Manager; provides development services as a full team member.

The Technical Services Manager (SPA): develops project specifications and timelines to meet service priorities and project goals; manages projects and project leaders; tracks staff and service effectiveness; ensures that underlying systems support are provided (either by an internal Systems Unit, or else by outsourcing); provides development services as a full team member.

Programmers may be EPA, SPA, or contract positions (Alphanumeric, etc) or some combination, working in project teams. All programmers will receive standard training in the development environment, standard design constraints, common tools and templates, coding style, etc.

In this scenario, the TLT Collaborative's and the common PSP development would each be managed by a common team, which will help to ensure increasing commonality, greater staff redundancy, and more effective management and cost containment.

Potentially a common development service could include:

- Common hosting, including database management services and application development tools (standard ISP services)
- Strategic application development around a standard set of portal applications – leverage portal development and reduce costs.
- Project design and management services

Authentication and Directory Services

Another Alliance initiative that may be of interest to multiple campuses would be to explore the structure of a common directory and authentication system for common services.

Server-sharing and server hosting relationships

As ISP services become cheaper and more reliable, and as the cost and complexity of local server management grows, there may be value in evaluating available ISP options for large scale server and related database application hosting.