Call for Proposals for Innovative mLearning Projects

The Office of Information Technology is seeking proposals for innovative instructional initiatives to employ existing mobile communications technologies to enhance the instructional environment and learning experience of students at UTK through the creation and use of mLearning environments.

Description and Overview Searching for a “definition” of Mobile learning, or mLearning, reveals a multifaceted and still-evolving collage of ideas and perspectives. Present in all, though, is the notion of extending the teaching and learning environment to wherever the teachers and students are, by utilizing mobile technologies such as smartphones, feature phones, tablet devices, and laptop computers. Perhaps a good working definition for now is provided by the MoLeNet project in the UK, which defined mLearning as “the exploitation of ubiquitous handheld technologies, together with wireless and mobile phone networks, to facilitate, support, enhance and extend the reach of teaching and learning.” Major instructional technology associations such as the New Media Consortium and the EDUCAUSE Learning Initiative agree that “while the application of mobile technology to learning is just now getting under way, the potential is enormous and we can expect that the rate of development will be very rapid indeed.”

With these things in mind, OIT seeks to collaborate with interested faculty to

- investigate opportunities for designing and implementing teaching and learning environments supported by mobile technologies;
- establish innovative teaching practices for utilizing these environments; and
- explore the research possibilities of these emerging technology-enhanced teaching and learning environments.

Commitment and Requirements The commitment and requirements on the behalf of participants include:

- Applications for participation should include a BRIEF (two-page maximum) description of the course that will integrate the mobile technology component(s); the number and status of students to be involved; and distinguishing features of the course, course content, and instructional objectives that make the proposal a high-priority candidate for inclusion in an mLearning Pilot study.

Applicants agree to:

- Integrate mobile hardware (wireless tablet or handheld devices) in their course for a minimum of two semesters, within the span of two years (either Fall/Spring same academic year, or Fall/Fall or Spring/Spring contiguous academic years).
- Participate in a 6-hour core training and development program that will include orientation to the hardware and software, and pedagogical consultation with individualized training and course resource development targeted at meeting stated course objectives in a mobile learning environment.
- Submit brief monthly status reports, via an mLearning blog established and maintained by the OIT mLearning team and the other mLearning Project participants, for the duration of the project.
Conduct pre- and post-course student assessments during the academic year(s) in which the project is implemented. OIT will develop and provide the essential assessment tools for measuring identified technology-enhanced learning goals. Individual faculty, in consultation with their peers and/or departmental colleagues, if required or desired, may include course- or departmental-specific assessment instruments as well.

Submit a mid-term and end-of-term status report for each semester, and an end-of-project final report to OIT, addressing specific course objectives, how and to what degree they were met (or not), and providing recommendations for program modifications or improvement as necessary. Participants are also encouraged to submit conference session proposals to national and international conferences in their own discipline or one of the major Educational/Instructional Technology conferences such as EDUCAUSE, ELI, or Ed Media.

**Project Support** The OIT Instructional Development and Training team will provide training, consultation, and support throughout the project. Determined by the technology configurations identified in the awarded project proposals, participants will have access to university-owned wireless tablet devices or small form-factor handheld devices, with the understanding that the university will not provide nor require any student, faculty, or staff member to contract with a third-party cellular service provider. Devices provided to faculty and students will operate independently on a WiFi network without the requirement of a cellular connection or cellular service contract. Requested supplemental software must fit within the pre-determined project budget and comply with university software acquisition and distribution guidelines.

**NOTE:** mLearning project proposals may allow for, but may not require, student use of personally owned wireless handheld devices during the course of the project.

Participants may request hardware and software as follows:

- **Hardware:**
  - iOS (iPad) or Android tablet device
  - iOS (iPod touch) or Android Small Form Factor (<5”) device
- **Software:**
  - Will be specified based on compatibility with the specified hardware device and instructional objectives contained in the application.

OIT will provide device setup and student orientation for the hardware at the beginning of each semester of the project. OIT will be responsible for hardware maintenance throughout the project, but cannot guarantee data security or integrity. Participants are responsible for securing and backing up all essential data at all times.

**Pedagogical Investigation**

Our research agenda for these projects centers on the following questions:

- How can/do mobile devices enhance or expand the activities of the classroom?
- What are effective teaching and learning uses of mobile devices?
- When, where, how, and how often do students access and use instructor-provided content using handheld mobile devices?
• When, where, how and how often do students create and share their own original content using a mobile device?
• When, where, how and how often do students share content created by others, which they have located or accessed via mobile devices?
• What are student perceptions of how handheld mobile devices expand or enhance their learning opportunities?
• In what ways do students perceive mobile technologies to be a distraction or impediment to learning?
• What effects do the students and teachers perceive mobile devices having on stated course learning objectives and goals?
• Do students and teachers perceive the mobile devices as having contributed to student engagement? Content mastery? Creation and maintenance of learning communities? Likelihood of student retention and progression to degree?

In addition, OIT will be investigating the hardware, software, and network support issues related to handheld mobile communication and collaboration environments.

For more information, please contact:

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