

Academic Technology Grant – Final Report
June 28, 2008

PROJECT TITLE

Curriculum Mapping in Educational Administration:
Enhancing Professional Practice Through the Use of Technology

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR

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PROJECT INTENT/GOALS

The UMASS Educational Administration program was awarded a \$6,800 academic technology grant to support faculty training in the use of cutting-edge web-based curriculum mapping technology (Curriculum Mapper™) in order to reduce gaps and redundancies across courses in our program, cultivate a shared vision, and ultimately, establish the UMASS Educational Administration Program as a pioneer in the field of instructional leadership. The original project outlined five primary goals:

- 1) To train/educate Educational Administration program faculty in the research-base and technological skills of curriculum mapping in order to improve programmatic cohesion, solidify programmatic vision, and aid in the ongoing evaluation of the Educational Administration program.
- 2) To utilize Curriculum Mapping™ technology in the design and implementation of all Educational Administration program courses, especially EDUC 691W: Leadership for Curriculum and Instruction, in order to model best professional practices and increase our student's capacity to function as leaders of learning in K-12 settings.
- 3) To develop an Educational Administration program website that will showcase the important features of the program, including all course curriculum maps; this will enable us to more aptly showcase and market the innovative nature of our program.
- 4) To provide a collaborative and high quality professional development experience for Educational Administration program faculty that will increase overall technological literacy and teaching capacity through the purposeful use of professional software (Dreamweaver) and web technologies (Curriculum Mapper™).
- 5) To document and evaluate the experience of Educational Administration program faculty and students in the use of curriculum mapping technology and disseminate findings.

DELIVERABLES

- 1) We created an online, real time curricular map of the entire Educational Administration program that identifies the content, activities and assessments of every course.
- 2) We developed a new course, EDUC 691W- Leadership for Curriculum & Instruction that increases UMASS student learning in curriculum mapping technology.
- 3) We submitted a paper for presentation at the 2008 AEA Annual Meeting.
- 4) We forged new partnerships with public school personnel in the shared examination and use of Curriculum Mapping technology

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

We accomplished most of our intended goals and deliverables. Our department purchased the rights to access and utilize Curriculum Mapper™ web technology. During the fall of 2007 the UMASS-Amherst Educational Administration program faculty participated in two full-day training sessions with a Professional Learning Associates™ consultant and expert in the procedural and technical aspects of curriculum mapping. We have created and completed maps that delineate course content, activities, and assessments for nearly every course in the program (12 out of 14 courses.) We have used the technology to revise our maps and to showcase the unique elements of our program.

As result of these activities, we have come to understand the key issues related to the curriculum mapping process, developed a shared understanding of the purpose and benefits of curriculum mapping,

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learned how to use the software's navigation tools, created and edited maps, viewed the maps of our colleagues, calibrated and revised the maps, have identified areas of programmatic improvement and content gaps/redundancies in our program.

In the spring of 2008 graduate students in the UMASS-Amherst Educational Administration program engaged in an in depth study of curriculum mapping and its implications for instructional leadership. The course EDUC 691W: Leadership for Curriculum and Instruction was revised so as to incorporate the examination of program maps. Students used a calibration checklist to verify/triangulate the program's curriculum maps by checking for clarity and accuracy based on their real experiences with course content, activities, and assessments.

A paper for presentation consideration at the 2008 American Evaluation Association (in Denver, CO, November) was submitted by the conference deadline of March 14, 2008. In addition, a manuscript will be developed and submitted for publication consideration in the *Journal of Teaching in Educational Leadership* and/or the *American Journal of Evaluation*.

DISPOSITIONS OF FUNDS

The project was funded at \$2,984 below the original amount sought. As such, a few changes in project goals and deliverables were made. We did not purchase Macromedia Dreamweaver 8 Win/Mac or develop a program website, nor did we use grant monies for long-distance travel expenses. Remaining funds (those still available since the interim report) were used to fund travel (gas mileage) of the principal investigator to Pioneer Valley Regional School in Northfield, MA, whose full faculty is using Curriculum Mapper technologies. The Principal Investigator met on several occasions with the principal, his school leadership team, and teachers to examine the quality of the maps. In addition, the principal traveled to UMass-Amherst to present to our graduate students on the use, viability, and learning outcomes of curriculum mapping.

It is understood that any remaining unencumbered funds will be returned to the President's Office.

CHALLENGES

The most challenging aspect of this project was the wide range of readiness and comfort among faculty members in relation to a) technological skills and b) conceptual understanding of the curriculum mapping process. Those faculty members with a high degree of pre-existing computer savvy who also have a theoretical and practical understanding of concept-based curriculum and the "backward planning process" used in public school settings were able to map their courses using the technology with relative ease. These "tech savvy-conceptual grounded" faculty tend to be earlier in their academic careers and have public PreK-12 school teaching and/or leadership experience. They stand in contrast to the "technologically underdeveloped – conceptually uncertain/unaware" faculty members who tend to be more senior, have little (if any) public school teaching/leadership experience and a minimal understanding of concept-based curriculum development and the "backward-planning" process used in the public school arena. In the future, additional training and support will need to be differentiated and personalized so that the range of skills can be accommodated.

A second challenge has been with the Curriculum Mapper™ software. Curriculum mapping is essentially a PreK-12 school improvement instructional leadership process, and the supporting technologies are developed with the public school landscape in mind. As such there are several features (e.g. data input categories, professional language, analysis frameworks, etc.) of Curriculum Mapper™ that are irrelevant and add an additional layer of complexity to the mapping process that we must work through. The support staff at Professional Learning Associates™ have helped us to navigate and overcome these issues.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

The grant has provided us with an opportunity to really "walk the talk" by modeling first hand the use of research-based technology for our UMASS-Amherst graduate students seeking PreK-12 school and district based leadership positions (e.g. superintendent, principal, curriculum director, etc.) – positions in

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which they will be expected to facilitate school improvement and gains in student achievement through effective instructional leadership strategies such as curriculum mapping. Perhaps more importantly, this grant has broken down barriers between faculty members with independent areas of scholarship and expertise. It has also strengthened collaborative partnerships with public school personnel, including secondary school teachers and administrators. Overall, the grant has provided us with technological tools to systematically examine, improve, and showcase the innovative and rigorous nature of the UMASS-Amherst Educational Administration program. In fact, the use of Curriculum Mapping technology, and this grant, was showcased during our April 2008 National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) accreditation visit. We passed with flying colors.