

# UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA SUMMER INSTITUTE FOR ONLINE TEACHING

## ABSTRACT

Recipient of the 2004 Sloan-C Award for Excellence in Online Teaching & Learning Faculty Development, the University of Nebraska Summer Institute for Online Teaching emphasizes pedagogy—planning, instructional design, strategies for building online community, activities/assignments that promote critical thinking, assessment, and course management.

## DESCRIPTION

Serving as a key link in the University's faculty development efforts, the Summer Institute for Online Teaching, a five-week online summer faculty development program, provides online training materials and resources to University of Nebraska faculty. The Institute's goal is to enable faculty to design online course components that are outcome based, collaborative, and pedagogically sound. Through this Institute, faculty enhance their online teaching skills, learn how to use the University's course management system, and develop a deep understanding of what it means to be an online learner through their own experiences as students. The Institute's emphasis is on pedagogy (planning, instructional design, strategies for building online community, activities/assignments that promote critical thinking, assessment, and course management); five optional face-to-face technology sessions, geared to beginning and intermediate technology users, are also offered.

The Institute is delivered primarily online, and includes three face-to-face sessions, and extends over a five-week period during May and June (a time selected by faculty). It is structured around five online modules that focus on four skills critical to online teaching: planning, communicating, evaluating and managing an online course. As faculty progress through the modules, they create their own online courses and receive feedback from their fellow participants as well as experienced faculty facilitators. Novice and experienced faculty alike attest to the value of this interaction.

Since its inception in 2002, the Institute has served both experienced and new online instructors from every college at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. The more than 146 faculty participants and facilitators, and the over 435 distance and on-campus courses they teach per semester, represent 48 academic departments, the University libraries, and Cooperative Extension. The Institute was developed in collaboration with numerous on-campus groups, such as University Libraries, Graduate Studies, Information Systems, College of Education and Human Sciences, New Media Center, Teaching Learning Technology Roundtable, and the Instructional Technology Group. Bringing these groups together in partnership on developing SIOT has led to better working relationships. Participants indicate a major gain (30 percent increase in their comfort levels) for 16 to 21 of the 26 competencies, and slight gains (10–20 percent) for 5–10 of the 26 competencies. Evaluations have consistently indicated that the participants have found the Summer Institute to have “provided new and useful information for my teaching” and that they would “recommend the Summer Institute to a colleague.” Ninety-six percent of the participants felt that the Institute prepared them for online teaching. Ninety-two percent indicated they would participate in another online instructional development workshop. And over 83 percent found that they were able to remain motivated to complete the Institute. Participants continue communicating and collaborating long after the Institute concludes, using the university's online course management system as a platform to collaborate and critique one another's courses during their development. Faculty who master these techniques, then, have a persuasive influence on their colleagues when they exhibit renewed enthusiasm for their instructional assignments, and their students demonstrate heightened levels of engagement and mastery of course materials. Visit <http://extended.unl.edu/SummerInstitute>.