CHAPTER 16

‘APPY HOUR: BUILDING A FACULTY PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT TABLET WORKSHOP¹

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Abstract

Based on faculty feedback, our Instructional Design team has worked to create a series of workshops for faculty who teach in our tablet program. These workshops focused on a theme, and different faculty and staff were invited to present on the applications they use that fit the theme for that workshop.

Our tablet program has served 5000 students, and over 100 faculty have participated. The faculty have previously participated in a semester-long cohort, and a week-long summer institute to learn how to use their tablets and develop their courses. These additional workshops are so faculty can continue to learn about new applications and/or become experts in the applications they currently use.

Keywords: apps, faculty, instructional design, iPad, professional development, tablet, training, workshops

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Background

Fresno State’s DISCOVERe Program

California State University, Fresno (Fresno State) runs a tablet program for faculty and students. This year, 144 faculty and approximately 5000 students will participate. The faculty go through rigorous training to prepare them for the upcoming semester. They spend the previous semester in faculty learning communities (FLC), learning how to use their devices and making sure all their core application accounts are set up (we recommend the use of Blackboard [our learning management system (LMS)], Google Apps, Office 365, Socrative, and Nearpod). At the completion of that semester, they spend an intensive one week together developing materials for their own courses. Although faculty have their choice between an Apple iPad, Microsoft Surface, or Samsung Galaxy, most faculty have chosen an iPad (74% iPad, 19% Surface, and 7% Galaxy, according to our faculty poll).

Our tablet program is pretty far reaching. Faculty range from science and technology to humanities courses, and from brand-new tenure track faculty to those who are near-retirement. Currently, our faculty have to be recommended by their department chair or dean to participate, but it may be more open in the future. Faculty and students are given the choice between a Microsoft Surface Pro, and Apple iPad, so it is possible to teach a course filled with multiple device-owning students. Right now, we offer a grant for students to purchase tablets, which covers nearly all the cost of the tablet. In the future, that may not be the case. We anticipate, in the future, students being able to bring their own devices; ranging from cell phones, to tablets, to even computers.

This is the second full year of our tablet program. Over the first year, research found that students save approximately 58% on course materials over non-tablet courses (Fresno State, 2015). In addition, faculty have mostly switched to open educational resources (OERs) and/or low cost or free electronic resources (instead of traditional high cost textbooks). Since all students now have unlimited Internet access (comes with the tablet), faculty do not have to worry about students having access to the course materials.

Research has also shown that students enrolled improve their overall grades by half a letter grade (Fresno State, 2015).

Some of the goals for our tablet program are to first work on engaging the complex and evolving learning styles of our students, develop their technology skills to enhance career development, and reduce the cost of
books and materials for the students. In doing so, we hope to create an environment where learning can take place anytime, anywhere.

**Current Training for Faculty**

Faculty previously had two opportunities for tablet training. The first is a semester-long FLC that they are required to participate in. The semester-long FLC typically meets between five and six times over the course of the semester before the semester in which faculty are scheduled to teach their first DISCOVERe courses. In this FLC, faculty are introduced to some popular tablet applications (apps) used by previous DISCOVERe faculty members. These apps have different functions, ranging from lecturing and time management and back to attendance. The main purpose of the FLC is to get faculty comfortable with using their tablet.

The second tablet training opportunity faculty have is during the Summer Institute. During our Summer Institute, faculty work on redesigning their courses to encourage tablet use, and to make curriculum more interactive and collaborative. The Summer Institute is also a place where faculty can meet other faculty from across the campus and share ideas. Faculty are required to leave the Summer Institute with a redesigned syllabus and a plan for their newly designed tablet course.

**Proposed Additional Training**

At the end of the Summer Institute, faculty are connected with the members of our Instructional Design (IDs) team. Our IDs work to help faculty discover pedagogical best practices and new methods of teaching to ensure student success. As a member of the Instructional Design team, part of our job duties is to respond to faculty feedback and make sure the DISCOVERe program continues to evolve.

One major feedback our faculty gave was that they would be interested in having regular app-sharing sessions with other faculty to keep their skills up and learn new ways of using their tablets. Before our ‘Appy Hour program, we did not offer training for faculty beyond the FLC and Summer Institute.

Our campus offers a DISCOVERe Hub (The Hub), which is available to faculty and staff, but mostly serves students. The Hub is a paw-print shaped series of tables, where faculty, staff, and students can go for DISCOVERe-related questions and comments. The Hub is located centrally, in the library on campus, and it is open to all campus employees, students, and community members. In August 2015 alone, The Hub served
over 1,500 students, 300 faculty/staff, and 200 community members. The Hub is staffed by student guides; each guide has completed over 100 hours of training, focusing on customer service, technology, and application training (Fresno State, 2015). The student guides are able to run impromptu training sessions for specific apps at the Hub itself, but can also host classroom sessions at the request of faculty. They also hold regular app training sessions for students during the week, but are also open for drop-in appointments. It works well for what it does; last year, over 80% of service requests were solved in under five minutes. However, it is mostly geared for enhancing already-existing knowledge and for quick on-the-spot type trainings. The Hub area is also noisy, and although it is beautifully designed with collaborative work spaces, it would be hard to run a larger training workshop there. The DISCOVERe faculty wanted a separate space, where they can interact without students, to learn about new apps and ask questions to enhance their existing knowledge.

**Workshop Details**

To respond to faculty feedback, our instructional design team put together ‘Appy Hour, a tri-weekly mini-training workshop featuring tablet-specific apps. We use a different theme each time (our themes included things like productivity, collaboration, quizzing, etc.), so faculty can pick and choose the weeks that apply to their interests or needs. ‘Appy Hour ran for actually two hours, and had stations set up almost similar to a vendor faire. We invited both faculty and staff to attend and present on their favorite apps and tips for using their tablet (as long as they fit into the theme). Faculty were able to move from station to station and spend as long or as little time as they would like with each person.

The primary goal of the workshops was to create a space for faculty to feel comfortable asking questions about and experimenting with new applications for their courses. Using the ADDIE instructional design model, our instructional design team worked to create ‘Appy Hour sessions to achieve this goal.

**Analysis**

We used faculty feedback from our summer institute and regular faculty meetings to design the workshop. As part of the tablet program, our faculty are required to keep in touch with one of the members of our instructional design team throughout the semester, so we collectively know the kind of applications and proficiency level of our faculty.
We also currently hold faculty training sessions on other topics (LMS focused, mostly), so we know the days and times our faculty are more likely to attend. We scheduled four sessions, one every three weeks, during the Fall 2015 semester.

**Design**

For our first ‘Appy Hour, our theme focused on productivity applications. These are the ones that are typically most asked for. Our faculty expressed interest in to-do list style apps and calendaring style apps in the feedback, so we started with those. Since it was our first session, I invited student guides from The Hub to present, and our IDs presented as well. Since it was our first session, we did not invite faculty to present, but only to attend. That changed with our future sessions.

We decided to utilize our current office area. We have an open lobby with tables and chairs, and posted a map at the entrance of our lobby. The map included the app title and a brief overview, and where it was located in our lobby. We encouraged faculty to hop from station to station, allowing them to choose the apps they were most interested in. We also allowed faculty to drop in, and leave, as they pleased, over the course of the two hours.

Our ID team did not put any parameters on the style of presentation, but we set up computer stations for our presenters. Participants were encouraged to bring their tablets and follow along throughout the presentation. We also had an area for faculty to sit and reflect, both individually and collectively.

**Development**

Our instructional design team was available to help any presenters or participants with any issues they may have with setup. Beyond that, the application presentations were dependent upon the individual presenters. We had a variety of technology available (working computer labs with projecting, large external monitors for computer/tablet hookup, etc) and space in our faculty organization on our LMS for electronic handouts.

**Implementation/Evaluation**

In Fall 2015, we held three ‘Appy Hour workshop sessions. Our first ‘Appy Hour session only had one faculty participant. We had to switch formats, and instead of the participant moving around, we chose to have
the presenters move to her. She was not a current DISCOVERe faculty, which was interesting, but instead was looking for a calendaring app to use personally. She seemed most interested in Evernote, which one of our student guides was able to chat with her about. She reported that she heard of our session through the e-mail that was sent to the faculty the week prior.

Our second ‘Appy Hour session was more successful. Our theme was on Quizzing apps, and only our ID team was scheduled to present. Over the course of the two hours, faculty came in and were able to hear about Socrative (an in-class quiz app), Nearpod (a quiz app that doubles as a lecture tool), Kahoot (a gaming quiz app), and Blackboard Quizzes (our LMS quiz app). Even though the attendance was still low, faculty shared their experiences using some of the apps, and were able to connect with other faculty to share ideas. The session turned into a brainstorming session of sorts, which worked out really positively. Faculty reported being excited about the opportunity, and asked about future sessions.

The third session’s theme was on scheduling. Since it was at the end of the semester, faculty were focused on creating their next semester plans and were looking for some inspiration. We included the apps: Trello (a productivity/to-do list app), Diigo (an app that allows to save and annotate website information), Remind 101 (an app that lets you send text messages to students), Asana (an app that helps schedule group work) and Google Keep (a Google notetaking app). More faculty came at the beginning of this workshop session, rather than previously when faculty would show up throughout the session, which was helpful since we were able to run the workshop as designed.

Since there were less than a dozen faculty at each session, we asked for verbal feedback as the faculty were leaving the session, rather than having faculty fill out an evaluation form.

**Conclusion**

Overall, ‘Appy Hour was not considered successful. We only managed to attract more than a dozen faculty, and the resources needed to sustain the workshop series were too high for the number of faculty reached. We are currently brainstorming other ways to help our DISCOVERe faculty stay current, one of them being to create a third required training session that happens a year or so after the completion of the first DISCOVERe course.

Although our faculty recognize that constant training updates are necessary to keep fresh in the classroom, training sessions are sparsely attended. Faculty report wanting to attend sessions, but also report
sessions not being available. Our ID team is also working on more effective ways of advertising training sessions for faculty, and creating online, self-paced training sessions.
References
