



Executive Summary
Quality, Assessment, and Subject Coordination Task Force Center

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Executive Summary

As stated in the VLC Extended Development Centers Request for Proposals, the overall purpose of the Quality, Assessment, and Subject Coordination Task Force Center is to “ensure that the distance learning objects, modules, courses, and programs being developed are pedagogically sound and that resources are being used in the areas of greatest need.”

The following Expected Outcomes are outlined in the RFP:

1. Develop an inventory of current best practices that have been used to effectively guide distance education course and program development. *COMPLETE*
2. Using this inventory construct a set of standards for developing interactive, pedagogically sound distance learning courses and programs. *COMPLETE*
3. Develop a system for collaboration among the current VLC course development structure, the Technology Center, and the Professional Development Center to provide a team approach to quality assurance in the work of the Centers. *ONGOING*
4. Develop a system for assessing content areas and student support services for which distance learning opportunities are needed. *THIRD-YEAR PROJECT*
5. Develop a system for assessing existing VLC courses and programs and making recommendations for quality improvements. *COMPLETE*

The Quality, Assessment, and Subject Coordination Task Force Center is also responsible for coordinating activities at other Centers in the following areas. Each of these activities has been completed:

- A. Development of discipline specific interactive learning content and resources;
- B. Development of student-centric learning activities;
- C. Assessment of student learning and evaluation of results to guide course redesign activities;
- D. Assessment of the integration of technology resources into courses.

This executive summary provides an overview of the Center’s projects to date along with analysis and recommendations.

Overall recommendations: Improved communication and marketing of current resources including VLC resources and website, NC-NET and NCLOR are needed at a local level. The results clearly indicate the need for a permanent Quality and Assessment Center for the NCCCS.

Inventory of Common Practices for Evaluating Online Courses

This project addressed the following outcomes and activities explained above: 1, A, B, C.

The Center gathered checklists, criteria, and guidance on common practices for evaluating online courses from North Carolina community colleges, universities and four-year colleges, and other consortia and organizations (including Quality Matters and SACS). An inventory of references was created, and the highest domain items from the reviewed resources were analyzed and cataloged. These domain items include the following:

- Policies
- Course Overview
- Resources
- Access
- Learner Support
- Instructional Design
- Presentation
- Accessibility

Each reference was then analyzed using the highest domain items and a cross-referenced list was created showing which resources included which high-level domains and which resources had gaps in coverage. A taxonomy of domains was created, showing subordinate components and elements associated with each domain and grouping and labeling commonly used criteria and terms. Additional references for instructional design and accessibility were found during the research process, and these references were also cataloged.

An online course evaluation matrix was developed as a result of this research. Based on the highest domain items with the subordinate components and elements included, this integrated evaluation product was produced in Excel.

These products were used to redesign the VLC course template, to train developers of online content, and to train editors who review online courses for release to VLC schools. These materials have also been made available to instructors and administrators for use at individual institutions.

A next step in refinement of the course evaluation instrument would be to tighten the operational definitions so they are more discrete. Also, the taxonomy and the instrument based on it might be expanded to include post-implementation domains. Findings made it clear that *when* one evaluates makes a difference. Once a course is operational, post-implementation evaluation should be considered for quality improvement cycles, for stakeholders external to the course, and for the course itself. These important additions would allow the instrument to be used for course and program evaluations reviewed by SACS, for example.

Quality Matters Course Evaluation

This project addressed the following activity: C.

In order to evaluate instructional design of course content, courses developed following the VLC template guidelines were compared to the eight broad areas addressed by the Quality Matters rubric standards: course overview and introduction, learning objectives, assessment and measurement, resources and materials, learner engagement, course technology, learner support, and accessibility.

The rubric evaluates courses based on 40 standards, including 14 “essential standards,” those standards considered essential in a quality online course and which receive the highest point value of three. Standards assigned two points are considered very important but not essential. Standards assigned one point are considered important but not essential. The maximum number of points possible for any course is 80 points. To meet Quality Matters expectations and attain recognition, a course must receive a score of three on all essential standards (42 points total) and a total overall score of at least 68 points.

A stratified random sample was taken of the 70 VLC courses available in English, History, Math, Social Science, and Science. This resulted in 16 courses to be evaluated. Seven expert evaluators were assigned between six and nine courses each. A training session was held prior to the study using courses that were not included in the sample.

Results: The evaluations of the three experts for each course determined a “team” rating for each of the 40 standards and a “team” score for the course. Only one course (Spanish 111) out of the 16 met all 14 essential standards and achieved a total overall score of 68 or higher. Although seven of the 16 courses evaluated had total scores of 68 or higher, these courses failed to meet all 14 essential standards. At this rate, we can expect that only four of the 70 courses available meet the Quality Matters standards.

The proportion of negative responses for each standard across courses and evaluators was examined. Standard VII.3 was the standard most often deemed not met by the evaluators across courses; of the 48 total evaluations of this standard, 79% of the time this standard was not met. Standard VII.3 states that “course instructions articulate or link to an explanation of how the institution’s student support services can assist the student in effectively using the resources provided.” Four Quality Matters essential standards were included in this list: V.3 (65% of the time this standard was not met), VIII.1 (58% of the time not met), III.3 (52% of the time not met), and III.2 (44% of the time not met):

- V.3 – Clear standards are set for instructor response and availability (turn-around time for email, grade posting, etc.).
- VIII.1 – The course acknowledges the importance of ADA requirements.
- III.3 – Specific and descriptive criteria are provided for the evaluation of students’ work and participation.
- III.2 – The course grading policy is stated clearly.

Recommendations: To improve quality, a model course such as Spanish 111 could be provided to course developers, or models of the essential standards that were most often violated could be shared. An

evaluation similar to this could be performed on each new VLC course to ensure that it meets Quality Matters standards. Existing courses may also need to be reviewed.

Some evaluators were more critical in determining whether or not a course met standards while some evaluators were more flexible. The number of standards not met for a particular course ranged from as little as a difference of one among evaluators to as much as 19. Additional training may be needed to decrease the variability in evaluators' ratings of the standards.

Best Practices – Learning Objects

This project addressed the following activities: A, B, D.

After conducting research on learning objects, the Center developed the following materials:

1. Checklist for VLC Structured Learning Objects To Be Used by VLC Course Developers, Technical Editor, Instructional Designer: Checklist for Content, Editing, Design, Technical Needs, ADA Compliance, and Meta Data
2. Definition of a Structured VLC Learning Object and How to Develop
3. What is a VLC Learning Object?

The Center also made the following recommendations regarding learning objects and the VLC:

The extended VLC Centers should host a five-day training session to construct a sample course in the new VLC template which reflects the NC-LOR partnership. Key members from all centers should participate. The purpose of this training would be to identify technology and professional development needed as part of the assessment of the new VLC development standards.

The extended VLC Centers should make a commitment to NC-LOR with the understanding that the VLC will author learning objects subject to the limitations of the learning management system as part of developing complete courses.

Due to limitations of Equella, the VLC should maintain complete courses that are downloadable to local colleges on their server.

The following Learning Object Use Recommendations for VLC Courses were developed:

- Learning objects should be used as resources for VLC.
- VLC will author and contribute content to NC-LOR.
- At the end of the cycle, someone should be designated to contribute learning objects to NC-LOR.
- VLC template reflects alignment with NC-LOR; learning objects are added as a repository of content in modules.

The following suggestions were made for RFPs for development/editing centers:

- Multimedia technician is needed at the center level.
- Technical editor is needed at the center level.

- Instructional design editor is needed to supervise content at the center level.
- NC-LOR contributor is needed at the center level.
- ADA compliant technician is needed at the system level.
- VLC managing editor is needed at the system level.
- Courses need to be converted to Moodle.
- Moodle converters are needed (center level).
- Internships are recommended (preference given to those who applied for centers).
- Compensation scale defining clear duties is recommended for all editors.
- Keep current centers for this pilot year of partnering with NC-LOR.

2007-2008 VLC Participant Surveys

This project addressed the following outcomes and activities: 3, 5, C.

Surveys were administered to course developers, course editors, technical editors, center editors/instructional designers, and center directors to assess the 2007-2008 VLC course development and editing process. Forty-nine of the 72 individuals (68%) who participated in the cycle responded to VLC surveys conducted from September 5-25, 2008. The VLC Managing Editor and administrative assistants to the center editors were not surveyed.

Overall results from all surveys for the following survey sections are summarized below:

- Selection Process
- Training
- Communication/Support Received from VLC Staff
- Manageability of Timelines/Deadlines
- Teamwork
- Compensation
- Overall Satisfaction
- Respondent Recommendations

Selection Process: Of the 48 total respondents, 31 indicated that the selection process was satisfactory, 16 indicated that they did not know enough about the process to evaluate it, and 1 percent chose a neutral response.

Training: Most respondents selected “satisfactory” or “neutral” in response to questions about the various components of the training. The following training components received a “not satisfactory” rating from 1 or 2 respondents:

- Advance notice and information about the event(s)
- Effective use of session time
- Explanation of VLC approach
- Explanation of VLC Blackboard template
- Explanation of VLC review sheet

- Explanation of VLC style guide
- Organization of session
- Relevant/useful supporting materials provided
- Scheduling (dates) of the event(s)
- Training session room accommodations

Communication/Support Received from VLC Staff: Survey participants were asked to evaluate the level and quality of communication/support received from VLC staff, including Managing Editor, Center Director, Administrative Assistant to the Center Director, Center Editor/Instructional Designer, Technical Editor, Course Developers, and Course Editors. The Center Directors were also asked to evaluate NCCCS personnel. Not all survey participants evaluated all positions. Respondents indicated overall satisfaction with the support they received.

Manageability of Timelines/Deadlines: Most of the respondents (88%) indicated that the timelines and deadlines were manageable.

Teamwork: Of those who evaluated the overall teamwork process, 86% indicated satisfaction. This question was skipped by those who did not participate in team editing or developing.

Compensation: Satisfaction with compensation received the lowest rating in the survey with 63% of respondents indicating satisfaction and 24% indicating dissatisfaction. Thirteen percent were neutral.

Overall Satisfaction: Eighty-eight percent of the respondents indicated overall satisfaction with their VLC experiences. Three respondents indicated a neutral response; three skipped the question. There were no negative responses. Ninety-four percent indicated they would be willing to work for the VLC again; three respondents skipped the question, and there were no negative responses.

Respondents' Recommendations: Respondents were provided opportunities to add suggestions and comments in each section of the survey. In a few cases, suggestions that were made for one category actually related more directly to a different category. Category adjustments are reflected in the list below.

Selection Process

- Communicate more effectively about VLC opportunities, including the opportunity to self-nominate.
- Have system office provide clearer guidelines about the selection process.
- Assure that knowledgeable and enthusiastic instructors are chosen.
- Assure that VLC developers and editors are volunteers rather than appointees.
- Assure that developers/editors have experiences with online classes and team teaching.
- Have system office recruit developers.
- Ensure that developers/editors have Blackboard/CMS experience.

Training

- Provide additional training for new developers/editors.
- Provide hands-on sessions during training events so developers/editors can begin working on tasks.
- Use Elluminate/Webinar sessions for training.
- Give training earlier in the year, with inexperienced developers provided more intense training.
- Explain ADA requirements more thoroughly.
- Provide training on methods of interactive communication.
- Provide more information on online teaching methods.
- Include introduction to the Blackboard VLC template.
- Allow teams who have edited multiple courses to talk about their editing processes during the training sessions.

Support/Communication from VLC Staff

- Use a communication model that includes extensive feedback.
- Give clear communication and feedback related to deadlines.
- Provide clear communication regarding course criteria between editors/developers and their supervisors.
- Communicate regularly and frequently with everyone involved in the center.
- Provide separate deadlines for developers/editors and technical editors.
- Retain a Distance Learning Coordinator/contact at the system office.

Editing/Development Process

- Keep criteria consistent during entire editing/developing process.
- Find ways to keep developers on task with deadlines.
- Establish earlier start dates.
- Extend contracts to the summer, so additional editing/development could take place.
- Work more closely with a particular textbook provider.
- Allow developers/editors to create content before finishing Outcome Chart.
- Update the VLC style sheet.
- Once technical editing is complete, assure that further content modifications are made by technical editors rather than course developers/editors.
- Make all requirements part of the template.

Textbook Selection

- Provide more information on textbooks that are available.
- Consider textbook costs.
- Ask representatives of the most-used publishers to recommend textbooks for courses being edited/developed.

- Ensure that recommended textbooks are used by a majority of community colleges.
- Ensure that textbooks are the best choices, not necessarily those used most often.
- Survey community college instructors/departments.
- Textbook recommendations are not necessary.

Teamwork

- Team people from same college.
- Set definite times to meet online and over the phone.
- Ensure that team members will commit to follow through with the process.
- Let teams chose their own teammates.
- Get input from the teams.
- Start earlier in the year.
- Provide software and other assistance quickly.
- Each team member should agree to work five hours per week.
- Ensure that developers/editors work with teammates they know and whose abilities and educational background they respect.
- Limit the number of co-developers/editors.
- Provide opportunities to meet face to face as courses are developed/edited.

Compensation

- Developers at university level make much more for developing courses.
- Gifts received were appreciated.
- If developers/editors understood per hour compensation, fewer would be interested in participating.
- For solo editors compensation was 50% of what was earned.
- Technical editors should receive the same pay as content developers and editors unless developers/editors are trained in HTML, creating and modifying images and videos, and formatting tables.
- Work completed deserves at least \$3,000 per editor/developer.
- Compensation should be established per course, rather than editor/developer.

Overall VLC Experience

- Provide developers/editors with feedback from end users: Are courses being used? What do users think about the courses? Do users have suggestions for improvement?
- Allow veteran VLC directors a choice in courses chosen for development.
- Secure qualified people as center directors and instructional designers.
- Have processes in place at the local college to handle grant.
- Provide a longer time frame.
- Make clear the responsibilities and compensations for co-editing, solo editing, and editing vs. significantly revising.

- Provide some method to help developers/editors to get to know each other, including sharing of backgrounds and approaches to problem solving, etc.
- Organize course by areas such as content, videos, assignments, and let instructor put the content into modules.
- Make sure Blackboard is working properly.
- Provide more face to face times during development/editing process.

Analysis/Recommendations: Overall, participants are satisfied with the VLC process. Not surprisingly, participants think that compensation may not be appropriate given the amount of time involved. Team members prefer more time to interact and request that team members already know each other before working together. However, the fact that 94% of participants would be willing to work for the VLC again speaks to the effectiveness of the process.

2008-2009 VLC Participant Surveys

This project addressed the following outcomes and activities: 3, 5, C.

Sixty-two of the 77 individuals (81%) identified as VLC course developers, course editors, technical editors, center editors/instructional designers, center directors, and VLC converters during the 2008-2009 VLC cycle responded to the VLC surveys conducted from April 29-May 15, 2009. The VLC managing editor and administrative assistants to the centers were not surveyed.

Overall results from all surveys for these survey sections are summarized below:

- Selection Process
- Training
- Staff Support and Communication
- Timelines/Due Dates
- Editing/Center Direction/Conversion Processes
- Teamwork
- Experiences with Learning Objects
- Compensation
- Overall Experience
- Respondent Recommendations

Selection Process: Of the 62 respondents, 34% were nominated or contacted by the Distance Learning Administrator at their college and 32% were nominated or contacted by a VLC center director or other VLC staff member. This indicates that the call for participation is an effective strategy. Regarding the respondents' assessment of the VLC process for selecting participants, 51% of the survey respondents indicated that the selection process was satisfactory. Of the remaining respondents, 24% indicated they did not know enough to answer, 18% were neutral, and 5% indicated the process was unsatisfactory.

Training: Various training opportunities were scheduled for the 2008-2009 VLC cycle. Twenty-seven participants attended the VLC "Kick Off" Session at Wake Tech on October 31, 2008. Forty-one attended

initial training in fall 2008, with one participating via Information Highway. Fifty attended the training at the NC3ADL Conference in February 2009. One participant did not attend a VLC training event.

As for respondents' opinions about the various components of the training provided, the following received an "unsatisfactory" rating with the number of respondents in parentheses:

- Instructions on reviewing/evaluating learning objects (11)
- Explanation of learning objects (10)
- Instructions on contributing learning objects (10)
- Instructions on creating learning objects (9)
- Effective use of session time (7)
- Clear directions given for first steps to complete in developing a course (5)
- Scheduling (4)
- Explanation of VLC approach (4)
- Geographical location of the events (4)
- Organization of session (3)
- Relevance/usefulness of session content (3)
- Explanation of VLC review sheet (3)
- Advance notice and information about the events (2)
- Training session room accommodations (2)
- Explanation of VLC Blackboard template (2)
- Relevant/useful supporting materials provided (1)
- Explanation of VLC style guide (1)
- Travel reimbursements for attending events (1)

Respondents offered these comments as well:

- Training rooms at Raleigh Hilton were nice. Power strips that didn't work or not having enough power strips for the volume of participants needs improvement. My computer battery died, making it hard to keep up in sessions.
- We changed to SoftChalk—wonderful switch!
- I thought everything was handled very well and was very helpful. I thoroughly enjoyed the training received.

Communication/Support Received from VLC Staff: Survey participants were asked to evaluate the level and quality of communication and support received from VLC staff members. The positions evaluated included managing editor, center director, administrative assistant to the center director, center editor/instructional designer, technical editor, and lead developers. Not all survey participants evaluated all positions. Respondents indicated overall satisfaction with the support they received.

Manageability of Timelines/Deadlines: Forty-five respondents (73%) indicated that the timelines and deadlines were manageable. Eight respondents indicated that they were not. Respondents offered these comments as well:

- First deadline came fast and at a very busy time.
- Certain deadlines were not clearly communicated during the process.
- Manageable, but very tough for those people who came in on the process late.
- Some were more aggressive than others.
- Although myself and my partner did not get started until January, we managed to pull it off.
- We didn't meet very many of our initial deadlines.
- More time needed to complete learning objects and course content.
- Not consistently.
- They were OK. They would have been better had items needed for the deadlines NOT changed during the process. It was like painting a moving train at times.
- These were not applicable in my situation since I came into the process so late.
- It took some getting used to, and I think many of us were surprised by the May deadline, thinking we had until April 10. However, having completed the process, I think I better understand and could manage the schedule.
- With the addition of learning objects in this cycle, the deadlines were unrealistic.
- It seemed the deadlines fell at the same time instructors were the most pushed with classes, but that may have been unavoidable due to the overall timeline.
- Only if you are extremely good at time management. You cannot develop a whole course in four months that has all the bells and whistles.
- We met the deadlines, which were manageable, but never heard feedback in time to revise. After revision, we never heard back at all. Still haven't.
- Too much work in a short period of time.
- Initially, yes. When extra things were added (submission of LOs, etc.), there was not enough notice.
- I liked that there was some flexibility if needed.

Teamwork: Of those who evaluated the overall teamwork process, 39 respondents (85%) indicated satisfaction. This question was skipped by those who did not participate in team course editing or developing. Three respondents were not satisfied, and four respondents were neutral. Respondents offered these comments as well:

- My colleagues were terrific to work with here at the college; however, we had much difficulty with communication at times with the directors located at other sites. See previous comments.
- One team member did not complete her part by the deadline (she missed every deadline). Also, her work was substandard and did not pass evaluation feedback. She did not take criticism well at all.
- Partners did not meet deadlines or carry their weight. Would have completed much quicker if I had done myself.
- I thought our time and skills complemented each other.
- I loved working with Cyrus.
- Beth was great! Went over and above her share of work, was always helpful and friendly.

- Greg and I work well together.
- We worked well together, even though we were very different in personalities.

As for the types of teamwork-related issues, these items received “unsatisfactory” ratings from survey respondents with the number of respondents in parentheses:

- Distribution of the workload (7)
- Quality of work produced by team members (5)
- Support for teammates within the group (5)
- Communication of group with supervising editors or other VLC staff (3)
- Communication among group members (2)

Respondents offered these comments as well:

- One team member did not fulfill her obligations and never met deadlines nor helped the other two team members.
- My partner had good intentions but let me take the lead and then over time didn't contribute or even help proof in detail. I was disappointed that my partner didn't even attempt to learn how to do a learning object. It would have been nice to have someone to brainstorm with. Partner's experience with Bb and course creation from the curriculum perspective was not current. Standard teamwork problems, nothing egregiously neglectful. No hard feelings, it did make things much more demanding and intense for me. In turn I learned A LOT and I have no regrets. I hope to do this again. Professionally this made me a better online instructor and instructional designer.
- Communication depends on the group. This question needs another choice. Same for quality of work. Depends on groups.
- I'm very pleased with the course content compared to previous VLC courses.
- With the addition of the LOs, the technical editing took triple the time due to having to create several of the LOs instead of editing them due to the lack of developers' lack of technical skills or not providing enough information/content for objects.
- Overall, the communication between the teams and myself was good.
- These questions need to be reworded. Most depend upon the group. Some work well. Other teams have real problems.
- I was a loner on this project. I would have liked to have had a team to assist me.
- Quality of work produced by team members improved with a great deal of editing, revising, revisiting, and reflecting. This was “painful” for some.

Experience with Learning Objects: This was the first VLC cycle that included creating learning objects for submission to the NCLOR. Respondents' opinions about the learning object development phase fell along the following lines: 33% indicated the process was satisfactory; 39% were neutral about the process; 27% indicated the process was not satisfactory. Respondents offered these comments as well:

- Concrete examples of acceptable formats should be shared from the beginning of the process. I know as contributions to the NCLOR increase it will be easier to provide multiple examples.
- My editing partner did most of the LO and I did the editing, test, assessments.
- It seemed that the desired results kept changing.
- I felt that I was thrown into the water and told to swim. I was not told what was wanted, just told that what I did was not what was wanted. It would have been much more manageable if I had been given clear instructions with examples instead of floundering trying to figure out what was wanted.
- I think the review sheets need more explanations as to changes when an item is marked as not complete.
- Pick and choose which courses do learning objects.
- The process as part of the development of course materials did not work well. However, once developers have been through the development of LOs, the process should be okay.
- Too many learning curves this year. For future development the process needs to be simplified. I would like to see this year's instructional designers and center directors meet to create a clearer process for future development.
- The process had to be developed mid-cycle.
- The learning object development process should have been complete prior to the grant start date.
- I feel that developers did not have a clear understanding of what was expected. Changes were made during the development process that added to the confusion.
- Being provided the content, I've had to build several learning objects for several classes even though developers were provided the software and step-by-step instructions on how to construct a VLC learning object. Furthermore, even though we encouraged those with simple learning objects to use SoftChalk, they insisted on using Camtasia mainly because it was easier for them to import a PowerPoint presentation than copy and paste the content into SoftChalk.
- Now that I understand it. The technology conference really helped. Rita was a great SoftChalk trainer.
- Patrick's examples were fantastic once they were ready to go. The delays were with "what" the VLC wanted more than anything. Again, consider defining what you want before the process rather than along the way.
- Too much was expected too late in the course development.
- Once I figured out what I was doing, it was fun.
- Orientation workshops from the software company.
- Orientation directly from the software company.
- I would recommend a template for training purposes: Prior Knowledge, Overview, Objectives. This may have been used; however, I found that most developers strayed from it for some reason.
- Trial and error. I am glad that I had not started them until I was introduced to SoftChalk.
- LO development should be separate from VLC development.
- I found this difficult because of the nature of the course I was developing.

Compensation: Of the 62 respondents, 34 (55%) indicate satisfaction with compensation. Thirty-four percent were neutral, with 10% indicating dissatisfaction. Respondents offered these comments as well:

- I guess more money is always better! This was a time consuming and tedious process!
- It was a lot of work yet I can't imagine the state being able to increase the funding currently.
- The pay was OK but should be more. The learning object creation and moderation process required way too many hours which greatly lowered the hourly rate.
- The added work for LO development and courses with a large number of images should be taken into consideration for technical editor compensation. I spent as much as 35 hours or more just on one object.
- Courses with lots of images should have better compensation due to the extra time involved in making sure images are accessible and ADA compliant and the placement is correct. This requires more time adding HTML code.
- We might need to be paid more for doing half the work of the developers.
- But we went into it knowing that it would be more for the experience than for the payment.
- It's not a lot of money when two people split it, considering how much time it took.
- The work load was far greater than I expected. I also expected to receive the full amount of the contract. Instead, the withholdings (taxes, retirement, etc.) greatly reduced my compensation.
- I appreciate the payment. However, the time involved is amazing; the amount of hours put into the project makes the hourly rate pretty slim!
- When I look at the per hour pay for the work, it doesn't seem that great, but getting that check in the mail right before the closing on my house made it all seem worth it. If I do this again, I think I would work in a more efficient manner and actually improve my per hour rate.
- Everyone would always like more!
- It should be \$3000 per developer for the amount of time devoted to the course.
- A lot of work for little money.
- It was much more work than I expected.
- The pay was a bit low for the amount of work required.
- Would like a separate check. Taxed too much when combined with monthly salary.

Overall Experience: Seventy-seven percent of the respondents indicated overall satisfaction with their VLC experiences. Ten respondents were neutral; three indicated dissatisfaction. Eighty-four percent of the 62 respondents indicated they would be willing to work for the VLC again. There were five negative responses and three "other." Respondents offered these comments as well:

- Though satisfactory, it was stressful.
- There is a great deal to learn the first time. Additionally, many new items were added to the course development process such as the learning objects.
- It was very time-consuming, but it could be made better if the developers communicated better with the editors.
- I was frustrated with the VLC December through March. It is only now that the course is done that I would even consider doing it again.

- I really learned skills that will be beneficial with teaching online.

General Recommendations from Respondents: Respondents were given opportunities to provide suggestions and comments in each section of the survey. Those comments are found under the specific categories above. However, this is a collection of general comments respondents offered at the end of the survey:

- Implement a mentor program for new colleges to the VLC projects.
- When major changes such as adding learning objects to the courses, select only one or two courses per center to be the pilot courses. This will prevent some of the confusion and give the management teams time to revise and tweak the process and get the requirements and technical problems solved.
- Do not add so many major changes all in one year. Need to be sure of what requirements for courses and learning objects are prior to the start of development/editing process.
- Ability to work on planning in the summer.
- Define reasonable time frames and more hands-on experiences prior to the development process.
- Have the requirements laid out from the beginning and not make any major changes to the process without compensating people for it.
- Again, just making certain that developers are in attendance with each information session. I was not involved with the project such that this was possible, which I believe should have made this class “unfeasible” for this cycle. I think understanding the scope of work upfront is absolutely critical.
- Developers need more freedom in developing the course. Lots of things got changed in my course that rendered some things confusing.
- The process seems to be working very efficient.
- Give developers an additional two weeks.
- Hopefully my comments in the survey will help to improve the process.
- Trainers who can confidently teach us how to use a computer program, more examples during training.
- Because it was my first time, I thought I needed more training and more one-on-one assistance.

Analysis/Recommendations: Results are similar to the 2007-2008 surveys; participants are generally satisfied with the VLC process. However, the introduction of required learning objects in 2008-2009 clearly affected the respondents’ feelings about the process. Compared to the 2007-2008 survey in which 94% indicated they would participate in the process again, 84% from the 2008-2009 cycle said they would participate again. Participants recommend giving clearly outlined expectations up front as well as conducting training early in the cycle for any new initiatives.

2008 VLC Usage Survey

This project addressed the following outcomes and activities: 3, 5, C

The VLC program has made available to local college users a wide variety of resources and services, but many users are not aware that these resources exist or how to access them when needed. A survey was conducted to evaluate current usage of VLC resources and services. Various stakeholders were invited to complete the online survey including the Director of Distance Education and academic administrators at each community college; current and past NCCCS distance education coordinators; and VLC Center directors, developers, and editors.

The Virtual Learning Community Services Usage Survey contained 20 items. Respondents were asked to indicate whether or not the college used its own template or the online course design and if courses developed through the VLC were used at the respondent's college. Respondents were also asked to indicate the number of VLC courses used in the previous academic year and to list the courses. Respondents were asked to indicate ways in which the courses were used: "as is," "minimal modification," "major modification," and "as a template to develop a new course." They were also asked to indicate how much VLC course content was being used: one-fourth, one-third, one-half, or "all content." Respondents were also asked to indicate whether VLC templates were followed. To assess VLC resource use, respondents were asked to check from a list of five resources. Attitudes toward the VLC were also assessed. An open-ended format was used to allow participants to share any suggestions for future VLC work. Results are summarized below.

Involvement in Distance Education and the VLC by Time and Participation: 55% of respondents indicated an involvement of 6-10 years, with 25% indicating an involvement of 11-15 years. Fifty-seven percent indicated "slight" involvement, 31% indicated "moderate" involvement, and 10% indicated "high" involvement. Although direct involvement with VLC initiatives is limited, the evaluation found that over half of the colleges have offered distance education courses for the last 6-10 years, and one-third have offered courses for 11 years or more.

Use of VLC Content: VLC course use varied among colleges. Nearly two-thirds of respondents indicated that their institutions use 10 or fewer courses in an academic year. Only about 25% of colleges use 11 or more courses. Only one-fourth of respondents believe the VLC heutogogy is in line with instructors' preferences for online course development. Most notable was that half the survey respondents indicated they were unsure about issues surrounding heutogogy.

No respondents indicated VLC courses were used "as is." Minimal modifications were reported by 26%, major modifications by 37%, and 29% reported using VLC courses as a template to develop new courses. The amount of VLC content used was also reported:

- 18% reported using a quarter of VLC content
- 24% reported using a third of VLC content
- 32% reported using half of VLC content
- 8% reported using all VLC content

Use of VLC Templates: Fifty-eight percent of respondents indicated their institution did *not* use the VLC module template; 34% reported using the template; 8% were unsure. However, nearly half (44%) of colleges reported using the module template as a guide for course navigation and content layout. Forty-two percent of respondents did not use the VLC-suggested student learning outcomes chart; 32% did. Over half the colleges use the VLC course template, but only 15% use the VLC style guide. Several factors have been identified that contribute to this lack of use: hard ware and software compatibility problems, lack of knowledge about resources available and how to access them; lack of flexibility built into courses that are developed and offered; lack of effective training for those who use the VLC courses.

Suggestions by survey respondents on how to improve the VLC initiative are listed below:

- VLC courses should not be specific to a particular book or edition, but a general guide. [This suggestion was echoed by several respondents.]
- I like the idea of breaking the courses apart into modules.
- Offer more EDU courses.
- Less full courses, more “chunks” that can be added to classes easier—most instructors only like small parts of current courses and so don’t use them or just pull those items out.
- I would like to see more “rich media” (podcasts and video) in these courses.
- Units of study developed by instructors with “specialty” expertise in that subject area.
- Seek out and provide better course development training.
- I’m open to any training that other groups want to put out there, as long as it is GOOD TRAINING! The training that the system office provided on Bb 7 Enterprise [contracted through Bb] was terrible! If the VLC can coordinate delivery of training by NCCCS’s best and brightest, then I’m all for it! And I think train-the-trainer would be the best format.
- One of the biggest issues we face is lack of training for our faculty in the use of tools for online teaching.
- Regarding training, I would like to see some formative evaluation for courses processes.
- Camtasia tutorials for LMS features, Web portal integration information, more professional development opportunities in a variety of topics.
- The NCCCS has some excellent people with experiences that are insightful. Additionally, there are those who are exemplary trainers. Perhaps we need an incentive to draw them out to share.
- Compatibility with Campus Cruiser is a big issue with us.
- The VLC module template does NOT follow the template used by Bb when you create a new course. This has caused LOTS of consternation on the part of faculty when they ask for a download from VLC and it is in module format. This just doesn’t fit in with our normal course template (nor with Bb’s).
- First, I need to say that it has been some years since we used VLC courses. The majority were heavily modified, at least two slightly. We really have used nothing in the past two years and the templates, etc., apply to Bb—not our platform, Moodle.
- In the early stages of online course delivery, the VLC courses were an invaluable platform. Now, the online instructors spend lots of time modifying the VLC courses and can receive

compensation for the work. This leads to questions—does the NCCCS get a good RIO if the VLC courses are undergoing extensive modifications at each college? And what percentage of inexperienced online instructors who use the VLC courses to get started? How will open source LMS impact VLC?

- Learning objects are going to need to be marketed and “pushed” if we are moving away from Bb.
- Perhaps the LOR could be used to house a copy of each instance of a course. Faculty should have dozens of course implementations of any one course number instead of just one VLC developed course to look at. This would provide variety and keep courses current.
- VLC Clearinghouse: A review and comment service for faculty to get advice about changes to any of their online courses.
- More information for faculty. A lot of faculty are not even aware of the VLC resources. It would be nice for faculty to preview courses without having to download them first.
- Better communication is needed between the VLC and the administrators and faculty. I have never heard from the VLC this year [07-08] concerning the nominations I made for editing VLC courses. Most of my faculty have not heard anything either. I am assuming that my faculty were not chosen to edit any courses. One faculty member said she was contacted one day before the training. There was no way she could make alternate plans with such short notice. There needs to be more communication. Support from individuals such as the VLC Editing Manager and current distance education coordinator at the system office is great.
- More structured contact with individual colleges.
- More focus should be given to non-static courses such as CIS, WEB, MOA and OST as these subjects change rapidly. When the state CIP changes a curriculum, the VLC should make it a top priority to update or align those courses ASAP. [Another respondent suggested that courses should be updated every two years to be current. Several more respondents echoed this sentiment.]
- I think it would be helpful if we had a regional meeting once a year. Something casual and informal.

Analysis/Recommendations: Respondents indicated that many faculty are simply not aware of VLC courses. Faculty who use VLC courses do not adopt them wholesale; they make alterations to suit their teaching style, their textbook, their college’s standards and templates. The VLC should explore ways to publicize the VLC project and make available for easy preview the courses that have been developed. Perhaps marketing materials could be developed to show the many ways that faculty can use these resources when designing online courses. Use of VLC templates is limited. The VLC should consider working with college personnel responsible for the quality of online courses to promote or market the templates as valid and reliable approaches supported by research.

NOTE: This Usage Survey should be administered again to see if usage has increased as a result of the new standards developed by the Quality and Assessment Center.

2009 VLC Usage Survey for Continuing Education Programs

This project addressed the following outcomes and activities: 3, 5, D.

A survey was conducted to assess what VLC resources and courses are being used at the 58 community colleges, specifically in the areas of continuing education (CE). The survey asked respondents to answer questions related to the online presence of CE at their college, particularly asking about third party agreements, VLC course offerings, and locally created courses. Respondents were also asked to report on online course development training, including training activities and delivery methods. Respondents were questioned on their involvement in and awareness of the VLC initiative, including NCLOR. Respondents also answered questions related to their expectations for upcoming grant cycles: what courses should be developed and what activities should be offered. Results are summarized below.

Online Presence: Ninety-three percent of respondents indicated they offered online classes through CE. Six percent did not. Eighty-seven percent of respondents indicated that they offered online classes through third party agreements. Twelve percent did not. Of those who used third party agreements, 100% used Education 2 Go, 9.8% used Gatlin Education, and 26.8% used other third party products: Insurance Educators, Career Step, Key Train, Trinity, GED Online, Med Prep, and Dearborn Education were identified. Respondents were asked if they offered online classes, *excluding Ed2Go or other third party*, within CE. Seventy-eight percent indicated they did, with 21.7% stating they did not but had plans to offer college-generated online classes. Of those who offered online CE classes excluding third party products, 59% indicated they did not use their own templates for online course design, and 41% indicated they did use locally created CE courses. Those 41% indicated they used the following locally created CE courses:

- NUR 3235, NUR 3213, NUR 3236, NUR 3240, NUR 3243, NUR 3250, NUR 3279, NUR 3242, NUR 3101, NUR 3216, NUR 3241
- FIP 3325, FIP 4728, FIP 4160-4168
- EMS 3050, EMS 3060, EMS 3000, EMS 3067, EMS 3075, EMS 3077
- OSC 3601, OSC 3602, OSC 3608, OSC 3637
- HRD 3001, HRD 3004, HRD 3005
- MED 3030, MED 3006
- HEA 3000, HEA 3002
- PHM 3244, PHM 3250
- HEC 3107
- HOR 3307
- ITN 3000
- MAT 3713
- MLS 3710
- CAS 3244
- COM 3002
- CJC 3952

- MLA 3017

Respondents were asked if their colleges used courses developed through the VLC for CE course offerings. Of the respondents, 15.6% indicated that they did use VLC courses, while 33.3% indicated they were unsure and 51.1% indicated that they did not use VLC courses. Of those who responded yes, the following VLC courses were identified: NUR 3240, NUR 3235, MLA 3022, NUR 3241, NUR 3236, MED 3030, NUR 3241, FIP 3610, FIP 5512, EMS 3044, "CNA courses," and "a great bunch." Of those who responded that they did not use VLC courses, the reasons given included:

- Blackboard training
- No full-time CE instructors to develop
- No faculty interest
- Locally designed courses meet our needs better
- Inertia
- No VLC matches
- Local needs
- No dedicated individual to manage this
- Modules are incompatible with our schedule

Eighty-seven percent of respondents indicated that they did not have a distance learning position specifically directed for CE; 13% of respondents indicated that they did have a distance learning position, with the following job titles:

- Distance Education Online Program Director
- Director of Computer Applications and Distance Learning
- Director Distance Learning/Occupational Extension
- Distance Learning Director, ABE, CE
- Distance Learning Tech Specialist
- Director of Continuing Education

Online Training: When asked if their colleges offered online course development training, 22.2% of respondents indicated they did not; 77.8% indicated that their colleges offered online development training. Of those 77.8%, 94.2% indicated the training was also available to CE adjuncts. One respondent indicated it was not; one respondent was unsure. Respondents were also asked if their colleges offered training in effective online instruction: 31.8% indicated there was no such training; 68.2% indicated there was, and of that number, 93.3% said it was available to CE adjuncts (with one respondent indicating it was not and one unsure). Respondents were asked which of the following training activities should be offered; percentage of respondents agreeing is given in parentheses:

- Online Course Development (87%)
- Best Practices and Online Tips (82.6%)
- Online Course Implementation (73.9%)
- Audit Concerns for Online Classes (73.9%)

- Choosing the Right Format: Hybrid, Web-enhanced, or Online (60.9%)
- Creating Appropriate Assignment Tools (58.7%)
- Other (4.3%) – “Understanding the Online Student” and “Quality” were offered as other training topics

The most effective training delivery method to reach CE faculty was identified as in-person (51.1%), followed by webcast (22.2%), Elluminate (17.8%), and delivered manuals (8.9%).

Only 16.3% of respondents indicated their college was highly involved in the VLC initiative. Thirty-four percent indicated moderate involvement; 48.8% indicated slight involvement. Respondents reported on their awareness level of the VLC initiative within CE: 19.6% indicated it was high; 32.6% indicated it was moderate, and 47.8% indicated it was slight. Those who reported moderate or slight awareness gave the following suggestions for increasing awareness:

- Email
- Newsletter
- Webinars
- Market the product
- Webpage with useful information
- Training and coaching
- Workshops
- More courses for CE
- Show us more of what’s in it for us
- Communicate with senior CE administrators
- Send info to CE distance learning personnel
- Lack of staff prohibits us from investigating these options
- Need greater participation from CE faculty
- Need easily attainable summary of any VLC courses

Fifty-seven percent of respondents said they were aware of the LOR initiative through NCCCS; 42.6% said they were not.

When asked what CE titles should be developed in upcoming VLC grant cycles, respondents indicated the following:

- Any green/renewable energy courses [these topics were mentioned numerous times]
- Retail banking, bank-teller training
- Supervisory training
- Language skills for the workplace (Chinese, Spanish)
- EMS
- Real estate, notary
- State certification – general contractors, tanning bed, etc.
- Medical law, medical office environment

- Public safety, allied health
- Software applications [also mentioned numerous times]
- Pharmacy
- HRD courses
- Classes to teach reluctant students how to learn online
- CAS 3120, multiple computer courses
- NUR 3279
- PHM 3250
- MED 3006
- OSC 3609
- EGY 3000
- OSH 3400, OSH 3801, OSH 3980, OSH 8000
- AGR 3001
- BAF 3249
- HRD 3003, HRD 3005

Respondents were asked which of the following the VLC should offer; percentage of respondents who agree is given in parentheses:

- Best practices and tips (84.4%)
- Learning Object Repository Training (64.4%)
- Learning Management System Faculty Training (57.8%)
- VLC Newsletter (55.6%)
- Scholarly articles, publications, presentations (44.4%)

Analysis/Recommendations: To meet their online CE needs, colleges are using third party agreements (particularly with Ed2Go) along with their own locally created courses. Only a small number also use VLC courses. Respondents seem open to online course training for CE adjuncts, particularly in the area of best practices and online tips and online course development. Respondents identified “green” courses and computer applications courses as courses they would like to see developed by the VLC. Nearly half of respondents rated their involvement with VLC initiatives, and specifically with CE initiatives, as slight. Reasons given for lack of VLC use within CE departments include lack of interest and lack of staff to handle distance education courses within CE. A more targeted marketing of CE resources to colleges is recommended.

2009 Online Student Services Review

This project, which is ongoing, addressed the following outcomes and activities: 4, C.

In order to make recommendations on what is needed from a system and local level for all community colleges to meet SACS requirements for student services online, and to identify best practices for online services, the Center conducted a review of online student services in North Carolina’s public educational institutions.

The resulting report, “The Evolving Role of Student Services in Education,” noted the increase in online courses in North Carolina’s public secondary schools, community colleges, and universities and four-year colleges. The demand for online courses is expected to continue.

The report also summarized the “five generations” of distance learning, from correspondence study to audio and video teleconferencing, to computers, to the flexible learning model and intelligent flexible learning. The flexible learning model combines CD-ROM-based interactive multimedia with the enhanced interactivity and access to a wide variety of teaching-learning resources via the Internet. Interactive technology represents the most far-reaching benefit of this “generation.”

Intelligent flexible learning is characterized by online interactive multimedia, computer-mediated communication using automated response systems, automated pedagogical advice systems, automated business systems, and campus portal access to institutional processes and resources. Online distributed learning is a learner-centered approach that integrates electronic instructional technologies, both synchronous and asynchronous, to create high-quality interactive learning environments. Through methods such as computer-mediated instruction, networked learning environments, and multimedia simulations, interactive instruction is taking place far from the instructional campus and is mediated almost entirely through electronic methods.

Student-centered intelligent flexible learning provides benefits not only for distance education students, but also for on-campus students. Today’s students—both online and on campus—expect online resources and services, and they expect the technology to be interactive, customizable, convenient, and personal. They want to be able to access what they need when they need it. This student-centered paradigm, promoted by growth in online instruction, is transcending the learning environment to have an impact on the organizational structure of student services. Institutions are struggling to meet the accreditation requirements to provide the types of student services online that are available to on-campus students.

Many institutions are redesigning their student services delivery structures. The report outlines six stages in this redesign:

- Stage 1 services are static web pages providing information about on-campus services.
- Stage 2 services add interactive forms, self-assessment tools, and the capability to communicate through email with service providers.
- Stage 3 incorporates personalized services such as student access to records.
- Stage 4 adds student web portals that individualize each student’s experience and develop a relationship with the institution.
- Stage 5 incorporates the use of artificial intelligence functionality to the above stages.

The report also includes the results of information-gathering on the types of online student services that are being provided to students in K-12, community colleges, and universities throughout North Carolina. Institutions have discovered that as they developed services for online students, their on-campus students began using them as well.

The North Carolina Virtual Public School (NCVPS) provides online versions of courses that are otherwise unavailable to students in their local schools. The NCVPS provides a catalog of over 125 online courses. Online student support services include 24/7 help desk, regional Virtual Learning Consultants, test preparation, and credit recovery.

The 58 North Carolina Community Colleges were surveyed, with 36 colleges reporting (a response rate of 62%). The survey indicated that the services most institutions provided online focused on the basic administrative core services such as admissions, registration, and tuition payment. The majority of survey respondents had these administrative core services available in an online format. Seventy-six percent indicated that lack of funds was a significant factor. Other reasons included lack of access to technology (35%), limited technical support (53%), and limited understanding and knowledge of online student services options (59%).

The project team reviewed the websites of North Carolina's 16 public universities to gather information regarding the online services each institution provided. This review revealed that 15 institutions offered online registration, admission applications, and payment options. However, no institution offered online advising or placement testing. Other online services available included career counseling (5 institutions), campus tours (11 institutions), help desk services (9 institutions), library services (15 institutions), orientation (2 institutions), testing services (15 institutions), and writing center services (7 institutions).

This report revealed that many institutions recognize the need to develop online student services to meet the needs of learners who expect convenient access to college services via the Internet and who expect that access to be customizable and personal. Educational institutions also recognize the need to meet accreditation requirements for online services to serve online students in the areas of administrative services, but also in areas such as academic skills, career counseling, campus tours, orientation, disability services, student government associations, and tutoring. However, they need assistance in gaining knowledge about which services to provide and how to implement them.

Recommendations: Further research is needed to evaluate the breadth, depth, and quality of online services available to students enrolled in North Carolina's educational institutions. This project will be completed in the final year of the grant. We will look at the capabilities of Web Advisor and will make recommendations for online services that should be made available and resources needed for sustainability.

2009 Presidium Helpdesk Survey

This project addressed the following outcomes and activities: 3, 4, D.

The surveys included in this report targeted the services provided by Presidium, Inc, a technical support resource providing help desk services for colleges using Blackboard or Moodle as their learning management system. A survey was administered to determine the usage of Presidium, Inc. in the VLC and evaluate the satisfaction of its users, both administrative and student. There were 26 respondents to the administrative survey from 24 different community colleges. The student survey identified Presidium, Inc. technical support users to determine which services were preferred and to evaluate

performance of those surveys. Non-users were surveyed about their problem solving techniques and solutions. The student survey garnered 384 respondents from approximately 8-10 community colleges in the system. Not all student responders clearly identified the college in which they were enrolled.

According to Jorge Quintanilla, Senior Account Manager for Client Services, Presidium, Inc. provides technical support for 39 NC community colleges using Blackboard and for 5 using Moodle. The findings from the administrative and student surveys are given below.

Administrative Survey: Of those voicing an opinion (26), 76.9% stated they used Presidium, Inc. for technical support. Non-users identified service providers other than Blackboard/Moodle as their preference for their distance learning environment with one Blackboard/Moodle user citing dissatisfaction with services provided by Presidium, Inc. as the reason for using other technical support. Non-users identified in-house technical support as their preference.

The majority of users (75%) have used the service since 2007 when the NCCCS first contracted with Presidium, Inc. Of Blackboard users, 90% use version 7.x with 10% of responders using Moodle 1.9. Nearly 70% of users stated they were very satisfied or satisfied with the technical support received with the remaining 31% somewhat satisfied or dissatisfied. Problems cited included long waits for assistance at the beginning of semesters, inability of Presidium technicians to find student accounts, simple password issues that would not be corrected, and incorrect instructions to students.

When asked about the monthly reports issued by Presidium, Inc., 60% stated they were very or somewhat helpful. Ten percent found them helpful and 30% did not know about them.

Many users cited the availability of service (24/7/365) as being of great benefit to students and were generally happy with the technical support. Support for the Moodle service provider was of concern to one user and another noted that students preferred the college's in-house help desk. Privacy concerns over possible access to student records by Presidium, Inc. was cited as was future licensing costs to the individual colleges.

Student Survey: The majority of respondents (58.6%) stated they have never used the Presidium, Inc. HelpDesk/Technical Support Resource. When asked how they found solutions to problems, most chose to contact their instructor if they encountered a problem and many stated that they have never had the need for technical support.

Of the 41.4% of respondents who have used the HelpDesk/Technical Support Resource, most (71.4%) chose to telephone for assistance followed by 23.2% electing to use the Live Chat and 20.2% submitting an assistance ticket. As would be expected, 64.8% preferred the telephone as their form of contact; 24.7% preferred Live Chat followed by 10.4% using ticket submission.

The vast majority of users (79.9%) stated the technical support agent solved their problem with 77% receiving assistance within 5 minutes of contact. Assistance taking longer than 10 minutes was experienced by 13.5% of users. Most respondents (82.5%) were very satisfied or satisfied with the help received with 11.2% somewhat satisfied and 6.3% dissatisfied.

Of those using the HelpDesk/Technical Support Resource, almost all stated they were satisfied with the experience and that the technicians were courteous and helpful. Other comments collected stated the student has not needed the service and could not comment.

Analysis/Recommendations: Key findings include the following: More than 30% of administrative users were less than satisfied with the service, and nearly 30% knew nothing about the Presidium, Inc. monthly report. Most students chose methods other than the HelpDesk/Technical Support Resource to solve their problems.

Strategic Planning Online (SPOL)

This project addressed the following outcomes and activities: 5, D.

Strategic Planning Online, a comprehensive, web-based planning system developed by Indian River Community College, provides a way to track Distance Education resources, program costs, and support. SPOL integrates the processes of planning, budgeting, and accountability. In July 2008, Surry Community College began the implementation of SPOL. A college team was assembled to implement a pilot of SPOL for Early Childhood Education and Distance Education. The team was composed of the Director of Distance Education, Early Childhood Program Coordinator, Controller, Chief Technology Officer, and Vice President of Planning. Implementation of SPOL has enabled college administrators and their faculty and staff to communicate more effectively about expectations for program planning. A hierarchy has been created from program manager to division chair, to dean, and to vice president. Greater involvement of faculty and staff has led to more communication and an increased focus on developing stronger outcomes and greater institutional improvement.

A first step in implementing SPOL was the initiation of the planning module. Each person within the administrative chain must review and approve planning objectives. Planning units also have the capability to notify other planning units of objectives that impact their units. The system provides reports that may be used to monitor the status, results, and use of results for any objective in the system. Each objective must be linked to one of the college-wide goals. This feature will enable interconnectedness within the college and a greater synergy in accomplishing the goals and mission of the college.

Several opportunities were provided for training of college staff during 2008-2009. Erin Bell, the developer of the system, provided hands-on training for faculty and staff. She also discussed the construction of sound objectives and measurement techniques. Additional training was provided during the planning cycle; college personnel had an opportunity to bring in their objectives and ask questions about setting up their plans for 2009-2010.

SPOL also supports the college's program review cycle, providing ready information on program outcomes and assessment measures and reviewing quality indicators. Successful implementation of SPOL will enable the college to provide planning data to SACS that is integrated and institution-wide, that includes systematic review of institutional mission and outcomes, and that demonstrates that the college is effectively achieving its mission.

This project is ongoing and will be completed with recommendations in the next year cycle.

Software Research

This project addressed the following activities: A, B, D.

In November 2008 the Center conducted research on software, gathering information on the following:

- TurboDemo
- ReadyGo!
- Articulate QuizMaker
- Wondershare QuizCreator
- HunterStone Thesis
- nSite
- XAMPP
- Dimdim
- Froguts
- WebAssign
- Jing
- Sketchcast
- LecShare Pro
- PBwiki
- Plagiarism Software
- Drupal
- Joomla!
- Echo

Best practices include use of various technologies to meet learning styles, accessibility, etc. As part of the ongoing support of statewide initiatives including VLC development, support of the professional development and technology center, and the NCLOR these programs were evaluated for support of various distance learning projects.

Recommendation: Program reviews should be provided to the local distance learning administrators. The Technology Center should include on website.