Limitless resources, advanced technologies, and high-speed connections aside, the learning that goes on in higher education rarely, if ever, happens without the thoughtful and watchful participation of an instructor. Everything else—from textbooks to PowerPoint presentations and from library resources to administrative services—exists to supports those who are essential to the learning process: the faculty.

While institutions increasingly embrace the notion that computer-mediated, technology-driven education is the path to improved teaching and learning, what are the challenges presented to faculty by the revolutionary changes brought on not only by new teaching and learning technologies but also by the demands of students now entering the academy? And what strategies are most likely to lead faculty to buy into the belief that technology can be a vital tool for improved learning?

Five sessions at the NLII annual meeting in New Orleans addressed faculty engagement and development, presenting case studies and findings to help guide institutional leaders in their understanding of the complex nature of faculty attitudes, motivations, cultures, and abilities.

A common theme among all of the cases is the need to create faculty support systems that are both scalable and flexible—systems that stimulate and engage faculty. And while faculty buy-in is essential to the success of technology programs intended to improve teaching and learning, it’s now widely understood that faculty themselves must be willing to see that technology-enhanced learning environments are inextricably linked to an institution’s ability to fulfill its mission.
At its most basic level, the integration of technology into the learning process can mean little more than a Web-based system whereby faculty members can post information about themselves, their courses, resources that support their courses, threaded discussions, and assignments. At Colgate University (http://www.colgate.edu/), whose core liberal arts values seem to inspire faculty resistance to technology, it eventually became clear that buy-in from faculty meant technology that was simple, accessible, and not contingent on a huge engineering and technology support staff. A presentation by David Baird and David Gregory of Colgate’s Collaboration for Enhanced Learning (http://cel.colgate.edu/) provided a glimpse into how an institution can, as its mission states, “provide coordinated support to faculty who want to explore incorporating technology enhancements into the teaching and learning process.” It was by no means a sledgehammer approach to faculty engagement. Instead, Colgate’s user-friendly, Web-based environment and associated professional development workshops ameliorated the resistance reflex not uncommon among faculty in nontechnical fields (see http://www.educause.edu/asp/doclib/abstract.asp?ID=NLI0306).

How did they manage to build such a nonthreatening bridge? By partnering faculty and librarians for discussion of teaching objectives; by adopting accessible, useful tools to improve access to information; by designing and delivering technology workshops; and by promoting successful uses of educational technology at Colgate and other campuses.

The situation becomes much more challenging at larger and more culturally diverse institutions such as the University of Tennessee (http://www.utk.edu/), whose information technology faculty development program has been expanded to serve more of its 1,500 faculty members. The University of Tennessee is now dedicating 13 full-time-equivalent staff members to the cause. And even at that rate, one-on-one support is out of the question. Four members of the university’s educational technology services described their efforts to extend their reach to faculty beyond what’s typical or even expected.
“How do we get beyond generalized to customize?” Educational Technology Collaborative director Jean Ann Derco asked. “We do it by trying to work smarter, not harder.” The university has extended the reach and diversity of its programs by funding department-based grants, by using a variety of media, by getting input from faculty, by following varied themes and schedules, by collaborating with industry, and by working in small groups.

Part of the success of the University of Tennessee effort is credited to the university’s ambitious wireless initiative, called the Wireless Instructional Initiatives program (http://itc.utk.edu/~jklittle/NLII_03/NLII_03b.htm). Julie Little, executive director of the Educational Technology and Innovative Technology Center, described her own and her colleagues’ efforts to “get faculty and students to think about using this network in their daily practice.” Little and her colleagues decided to target particular areas, such as humanities and other areas the support staff were familiar with from a teaching and learning perspective. They engaged faculty by way of stipends and hardware and software support and conducted surveys of faculty and students who used the network to find out more about what it would take to make the network a more useful tool (see the NLII Annual Meeting session titled, “Rethinking Faculty Development: One Size Does Not Fit All”, http://www.educause.edu/asp/doclib/abstract.asp?ID=NLII0331)

Helping faculty rethink their designs for teaching and learning is a priority at the University of Waterloo (http://www.uwaterloo.ca/), where efforts are under way to provide faculty with a new framework for how their classes operate. In a presentation titled “Engaging Mainstream Faculty in Designs for Online Learning Tasks” (http://www.educause.edu/asp/doclib/abstract.asp?ID=NLII0340), Tom Carey, associate vice president of learning resources and innovation, described a combined face-to-face and online workshop that provides task-oriented design models for managing online resources, learning resources for faculty communities, and new paradigms for software infrastructures.
As Carey described them, an institution’s goals for new design models should assume reuse of learning objects, faculty ownership of learning design, and a dramatic transition from concept to design, or what he refers to as “getting beyond the first design wall”. It should focus on learning activities supported by subject content, and it should model on-campus and online courses. It should also encourage the rethinking of learning processes. In other words, design models should place strong emphasis on activity before content, student ownership of learning, and the ability to rethink learning.

But where does technology fit into faculty roles and rewards? According to Paul Hagner, former NLII fellow and senior adviser of technology planning and assessment at the University of Hartford (http://www.hartford.edu/), there’s a connection between faculty development, the transformation of teaching and learning, and faculty rewards. And depending on the type of faculty member, the rewards will be different. For the so-called entrepreneurs, who are self-transformed, the rewards are personal. They do it because it’s the right thing to do. The so-called second wave consists of faculty members motivated by the promise of equipment, support, and training. For them, the use of technology is not in itself a reward. The third group—the careerists—will not use technology unless they see a direct link to career advancement. The last group—the reluctants—are not interested and do not see the rewards.

Hagner, who spoke with Perry Samson of the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor (http://www.umich.edu/) and David Starrett of Southeast Missouri State University (http://www.semo.edu/) at a session titled, “Faculty Roles and Rewards: Where Does Technology Fit In?” (http://www.educause.edu/asp/doclib/abstract.asp?ID=NL10324) said that for a university to move the faculty body forward in the responsible use of technology, development should focus on the second wave. Early on, Southeast Missouri State, which takes a centralized approach to support services, rewarded faculty with monetary incentives but later learned that faculty are willing to attend seminars and training sessions regardless of the rewards. And they’ve replaced long workshops with one-hour workshops offered by faculty with technical support.
Faculty engagement, though, means more than simply getting faculty members to adopt technology use. As Samson said, “Without engagement, there will be no catalyst for rethinking teaching strategies.” Samson says true faculty engagement means giving faculty the ownership of choices, design, and work environments. In fact, all panel participants in this session endorsed the idea that the institution must clearly demonstrate commitment to and support of faculty who are taking difficult steps to include technology and embrace change. The rewards may be different at each level of technology engagement, but they must be there for successful transformation to take place.

How institutions are retooling to meet the challenge of supporting faculty also provides food for thought. In a session titled, “The Advanced Learning Center: A Partnership between Academic Affairs and Information Technology to Support Faculty in Infusing Deep Learning into the Classroom” (http://www.educause.edu/asp/doclib/abstract.asp?ID=NL10314), John Haddock, James Penrod, and Sandy Schaeffer of the University of Memphis (http://www.memphis.edu/) described the unique challenges and surprising outcomes of creating the University of Memphis’s Advanced Learning Center (ALC), a faculty support unit designed to implement a campuswide technology fluency model, a deep learning initiative, the design of online and Web-enabled courses, and delivery of other academic-oriented services (see http://isweb2.memphis.edu/alc/pdf/ALC_Unit_Plan.pdf).

The challenge for the university was to reach beyond the traditional idea of computer literacy and use the ALC to promote a higher level of competency it refers to as fluency. Fluency with Information Technology—or FITness—is now embraced at the University of Memphis as an activity of the entire campus community—comprising faculty, students, and staff—and supported by the ALC.

Formed by a partnership between Academic Affairs (the provost) and Information Technology (the chief information officer), the ALC reports in a matrix fashion to those two executive officers. The chief information officer provides day-to-day oversight for
the center’s staff, and the provost provides budget oversight. A faculty-oriented advisory committee helps prioritize projects. The budgets have been consolidated and the combined operation relocated to the FedEx institute, thereby putting the organizational framework and actual resources in a strongly leveraged position with better coordination of resources. The transition, however, hasn’t been without challenges. There remains some difficulty in creating full campus awareness of the center and in motivating faculty who are still on the fence about the integration of technology into the curriculum. And there’s what the presentation team referred to as scope creep: the tendency of everything else to look like it belongs in the ALC.

What has the ALC experience taught University of Memphis about faculty development? It’s taught that long-term success depends on stronger faculty connection and ownership, that formal efforts to engage faculty and offer them support cannot ever be static, that a true research facet is essential to the effort, and that efforts to help and engage faculty must generate concrete results in helping the campus vision for information technology fluency.

**NLII Activities for 2003: Faculty Engagement**

The members of the Teaching and Learning Virtual Community of Practice (see [http://www.educause.edu/vcop/teaching_learning.asp](http://www.educause.edu/vcop/teaching_learning.asp)) are interested in faculty engagement as a primary topic area and are exploring the conducting of a multiple-institution study of faculty engagement. The purpose of such a study would be to obtain both faculty and technology designer perceptions about faculty incorporation of technology into their classrooms. The idea is to compare and contrast best practices for engaging faculty in technology initiatives from initiators and receivers. For more information about this and other Teaching and Learning Virtual Community of Practice activities, send e-mail to TeachingLearning@educause.edu.

For more information about Paul Hagner’s research as an NLII fellow and other resources, see the NLII Faculty Engagement Key Theme page at [http://www.educause.edu/nlii/keythemes/FacultyEngagement.asp](http://www.educause.edu/nlii/keythemes/FacultyEngagement.asp).