

Brief Description of Project:

Engaging to learn: Simulation & Games Phase II, Spring 2007 – Plan and Experiment, started November 16th. Instructors applied for awards to prototype their idea for a game or simulation, which would be developed for use in higher education. Projects were selected for funding by the Engage Faculty Advisory Group. Orientation sessions followed in January 2007 for the awardees. Awardees met Engage team members, connected with local support that would participate on the teams, and learned about Rapid Prototyping, the process to be used in sim/game development in the spring. DoIT project managers received the same training prior to the Orientation sessions.

There were 17 projects (awards). Each project had its own team. DoIT's Academic Technology Groups – Learning Solutions (LS) & Learning Technology and Distance Education (LTDE), each had staff who worked on 3-5 projects, and each project had at least one LS instructional designer on it, and one LTDE consultant. A Project Assistant will be added to each team for Phase III.

Teams were different for each project. Staff based on their interest, and the project relationships to each other volunteered for teams. Staff generally worked on projects that potentially had some overlap and opportunities for efficiencies, at the direction of the Engage Faculty Advisory Group. There were 2 types of teams who met regularly:

1. The Award Project Teams included the faculty awardees, DoIT staff, and any external-to-DoIT staff member the awardee proposed. In the case of no external non-DoIT staff, someone from ComETS (Community of Educational Technology Support) who worked in the awardees area was recommended to the awardees for participating on the team, and for ongoing support when the Engage project ended.
2. Project Management teams were internal DoIT teams that met biweekly at the Faculty Advisory Group's recommendation, to look for efficiencies and keep a regular check in on progress and any changes in plans.

More information about the Simulations & Games 2007 Project is available at:

http://engage.doit.wisc.edu/sims_games/index.html

PPR Participants: Chris Lupton (Engage Program Manager); Les Howles (lead instructional designer & overall project manager); Mike Litzkow, Ben Longoria, Brad Leege* (developers); Blaire Bundy (consultant lead); Dan LaValley (consultant), Jan Cheetham, Cid Freitag, David Gagnon (instructional designers); Christopher Blakesley* and Elizabeth Harris* (Project Assistants) *did not participate in Phase 2

Unable to attend: Renee Schuh* Carole Turner, PA Sirisha Karamchedu, PA Hans Klar, Steve Krogull, Cheryl Diermyer

Facilitators: Alice Anderson, Maddy Covelli, Elizabeth Curran

Meeting Date: October 1, 2007

Point Person for Action Items: Chris Lupton

This report contains four sections:

- I. What Went Well?
- II. Lessons Learned
- III. Action Items

IV. Recommendations for DoIT Projects

I. What Went Well?

***The Final Product**

- The Project Teams turned an Engage Faculty Advisory Group idea into a robust program.
- All Phase II awardees that applied to go on to Phase 3 were able to do so.
- The Engage Advisory Group valued knowing what was accomplished in phase 2 and what the expectations for phase 3 are. Managers were and are supportive and excited about this project. A presentation using examples will be given at the National Educause Learning Initiative by management and faculty.

***Faculty**

- Faculty members were motivated and excited for phase 2, as evidenced by their time commitment and team involvement. They liked learning from others outside of their disciplines, from seeing other projects, and from the teamwork. The process and project were new, enjoyable and helped them think in a different way about instructional design. They were appreciative of DoIT staff work.
- The videos and PowerPoint presentations faculty developed with DoIT staff for their Phase III applications were informative, well developed, and appreciated by the Engage Faculty Advisory Group.

***Teams**

- Project teams were interdependent, humble and respectful. No one team felt they could do it all on their own. They trusted each other, loved what they were doing, communicated well with each other, and all put forth their best effort.
- Team staff members were flexible, nimble--able to meet project goals, challenges and changing deadlines or due dates for high quality deliverables. Contributing to team success was having large enough teams to have a diverse set of talents and backgrounds. The teams had/have a 'can do' attitude combined with a high level of confidence, which when combined with the freedom to be experimental and take risks, a fun, highly innovative creative process and deliverables emerge.
- Team members learned from each other as the projects evolved, and from faculty about how they taught. Learning also took place in AT Brown Bags when staff presented examples of video games on the market, and research in Ed Psych on learning and games.

***Meetings (and training)**

- The PM bi-weekly meetings were structured well so members could share experiences, project status and challenges. Having topics researched in advance was invaluable, appreciated and saved time for other team members. Getting input and feedback from Filament Games Company in the overall understanding of both game design and learning theory was also valuable.
- The Orientation Meetings laid out expectations for the team members.

- Monthly Awardee meetings provided a chance for team members to check in with other teams and share ideas and challenges.

*** Rapid prototyping**

- Training on this process was very helpful. Les Howles' introduction to the rapid prototyping process helped everyone understand where to start, what was coming next and gave a big picture overview.
- Using the rapid prototyping method allowed project staff to have a common set of expectations and allowed everyone to speak the same language, despite the variety of different projects.
- The user-centric approach made it visual and helped with communication among the team. Pictures were taken to record this innovative process.

II. Lessons Learned

***Faculty**

- Faculty learned from the cross discipline approaches and from reviewing each other's projects (prototypes). Including peers, colleagues and department chairs in the review process would be helpful in getting broader feedback, fresh eyes to review, and to expand and refine ideas.
- Faculty willingness to experiment and work in teams is necessary.

***Teams**

- Formation of Teams is critical. Teams need to have the right people (faculty and staff) who are able to collaborate, willing to experiment, and are able to tolerate risk and uncertainty of project outcomes.
- Teams need to be large enough to have the diverse set of skills and backgrounds needed. Having game designers with each project from the start would be beneficial.

***Meetings (training)**

- Project team meetings are important and need to be structured. Meetings are opportunities to learn from each other. Shared Administrative issues should be kept to a minimum during project team time to maximize time for creativity.
- More game design theory is needed early in the process. Bring Filament Game Designers in earlier to have a better understanding of games and game play (overview), user action and motivation, and to set common groundwork. Having this background earlier will help instructors develop richer experiences for students. Simultaneously it is important to keep an environment of creativity, open to ideas, and encourage people to get their own ideas clarified and expressed.
- Having a person with expertise in pedagogy research topics, and do presentations for all is very effective and conserves time.

***Process / Product**

- Having ‘check-in points’ are important and scheduling these early in the process would be helpful so ideas can be refined and included in early storyboards.
- The application for Phase 3 could be improved to check if the project is mature enough to enter this phase.

*** Rapid prototyping**

- A clearer understanding of what makes a good prototype and what level of detail is appropriate would be helpful early on. If Phase 2 were repeated, having an example of a real prototype, including the sort of screen shots and functionality needed, would be helpful.
- Staff and faculty need guidance on determining the difference between minor tweaks and scope changes.

***Budgets**

- For some, getting the right level detail to be able to provide an accurate budget estimate was difficult.
- For a more accurate estimation the following order could be considered:
 - Story Board
 - Filament Consulting
 - Peer Review
 - Refine Idea
- It may work better to give an estimate range rather than a precise number. Having a budget at this point is helpful because it allows for a check in point to determine if the pace is okay or if there has been a major scope change.

ACTION ITEMS

1. Videos and PowerPoint presentations used to inform the faculty and Advisory Group from Phase 2 should be put on the Engage Web site for others, as information, and outreach to recruit faculty.
2. Consider rolling phase 2 and 3 together and having options or points to stop or drop out without considering the project a failure. There would be less stress or anxiety for applicants and more flexibility in time if it weren't necessary to stop prototyping and leave Phase II at fiscal year end, and then go through another application and selection process to begin to build projects in phase 3.
3. Application process for phase 2 could be improved by asking the faculty to state pedagogical goals and outcomes.
4. Assure that teams are large enough to have the diverse set of skills and backgrounds needed.
5. Include peers, colleagues and department chairs in the review process to obtain broader feedback, fresh eyes to review, and to expand and refine ideas.

IV. Recommendations for DoIT (based on what went well and lessons learned)

- Team meetings are great opportunities to be creative, and learn from each other, and develop/enhance effective working relationships. Administrative items should be kept to a minimum.
 - When forming teams, it is critical that the right skills and people are identified and included. People who want to collaborate, experiment, take risks, and have a ‘can do attitude are needed.
 - Pair up new team members with someone who has experience, rather than pairing up two new team members.
 - Accurate time accounting is needed to estimate time and budget requirements.
 - When several sub-projects are part of a project, it is necessary to have questions used in the Post Project Survey be able to get granular enough to determine differences between sub-projects and overall project.
 - Explore the Project Management process for differences within the DoIT culture. This project required nimbleness, flexibility, and comfort with sharing risk and uncertain outcomes (with faculty). It also requires a knowledge and understanding of the pedagogy of teaching and learning (with simulation and games, in this case)—that is not covered in basic project management.
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