

Running Head: PROFESSOR FOR A DAY AT NIPISSING UNIVERSITY

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Nipissing University  
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Part 1, The Context:

For the purposes of this paper, the context is a Bachelor's of Education program at Nipissing University, Brantford Ontario. This faculty educates students that have recently graduated from their high school program, and trains them to be teachers. The students are young, eager to learn, and very tech savvy. They are sometime disappointed with the fact that there is technology in the lecture halls, but the professors don't know how to use it. Both faculty and students are frustrated with technology as some students and professors simply use the technology because they can, and they feel that they should. However, the professors do not use technology, nor do they know how to use it, to enhance a lecture or presentation. As well, faculty and students are frustrated because there are often glitches with the technology but no one knows how to troubleshoot their issues to fix them. The result is that either presentations or lectures are cancelled, or the class has to wait for a technician to show up and fix the problem.

This university department has few full-time staff, and so is mostly comprised of part-time professors, contracted on a per-course basis. Often the university hires local teachers to instruct their students in various subjects, like teaching art. The school has five years of students, each year with approximately 125 students. As most of the staff is not full-time, it makes teaching them about how to incorporate technology, and how to troubleshoot that technology, is difficult. One professor is using WebCT to enable his students to easily communicate with each other, but aside from communication it is not relevant to his course (he does not use it to post lecture notes, due dates, nor does he use it to teach with).

In addition, the school has a laptop program. Every student in their third year must get a laptop through the university. The laptop is equipped with most of the software used in local schools, such as Corel, Maplewood, Milly's Math House, Sammy Science Club, and Markbook. However, the students receive little training in how to use their laptops, either as students or as teachers. They receive a single information session on how to save files, and how to access resources on the Internet.

Part 2, Environmental Scan:

According to Sarah Guri-Roesnblit, “E-learning ... is a relatively new phenomenon and relates to the use of electronic media for a variety of learning purposes that range from add-on functions in conventional classrooms to full substitution for the face-to-face meetings by online encounters” (2005, p. 469).

Internal Factors:

The teachers will need to be properly trained in how to use technology, how to plan it into lessons, how to use it to teach effectively, and how to troubleshoot when there are issues.

Other internal issues are some of the lecture rooms. The main building was purchased from an insurance firm, and is not ideal for classrooms. The building may need some upgrading or retrofitting in order to make technology more possible ? As well, the school needs more electronics, such as servers, in order to make e-learning (in an online sense, like Web Vista) work well for the staff and students.

Another factor is that students need to be properly trained in how to use their computers to their advantage. A single one-hour session is not enough to do this. Some students are very familiar and comfortable with computers and would only need to be taught how to use the educational software. Some students have little knowledge with computers outside of communication with friends through email, instant messaging programs, and websites such as My Space or Facebook.

A possible additional factor may be the storage needs of the faculty and staff of Nipissing. Currently, everything is stored on a remote server at Nipissing’s main campus. When the server at the main campus is down for maintenance, or is experiencing issues, Nipissing in Brantford is completely down as well. As well, if faculty or staff have problems at the Brantford

campus, they have to wait for technical support at the main campus to have time to correct the problem. This is a problem that should be rectified in the coming years. Servers can be expensive to set up and maintain, so again here cost could be a problem.

External Factors:

One of the problems with increasing the usability of existing technology, and getting more technology, is the cost of that technology. Nipissing has to go through their own university to get electronics such as computers and projectors, which greatly increases their costs. As well, any changes the university wishes to make with the structure of the classrooms or building will be costly. As well, the school needs to consider increased enrollment in future, which would mean that they need to not only match what they need now, but predict what they will need in future.

Another factor that will need to be considered for the future of the laptop program in particular is that students may quite likely already have their own desktop computers, or their own laptops. In previous years, the faculty has allowed the students to use their own laptops, but then provide only minimal software (such as a free one-year trial of Markbook). Students may not be able to afford the lease-to-own laptops that the school would offer, and may not want to lease them even if they can afford them as they may have purchased a better computer for a lower price.

### Part 3: Your Vision

This vision includes possibilities for the university which may not seem to be e-learning.

However, in her article, Guri-Rosenblit says, “all forms of learning/teaching through ICT are referred to as ‘e-learning’” within her article (2005, p, 268). Later in that article, she states that

“ICT have a huge impact on other important areas of university activities, such as: library

management; registration and loan administration; enhancement of research communities; academic publishing; mobility and cooperation between institutions” (2005, p. 471). With this information in mind, the plan for Nipissing University involves ICT in many areas of the university, not only within the classroom.

Five years from now, Nipissing University will still not be a school on the cutting edge. But Nipissing will be up-to-date with their technology.

A student applying to the Bachelor of Education program, five years from now, would find that the application process is online and automated. Any problems or issues that the student experiences with the online application process will be dealt with by technical support at the Brantford campus, not by the North Bay campus as problems are currently handled. Notifications for the application will be sent via email to the student. Student will provide email addresses, or other possible contact information, for the required references for the application. The references will be emailed a website address with the forms required, will fill them out and submit them. All information will be stored on servers in the Nipissing Brantford campus, not North Bay. Currently, Nipissing does not do this. All contact prior to the student actually being a student at Nipissing University is done through the mail. This means that it can take students months to receive their acceptance, weeks after that to receive information to register online, and weeks after that before they receive the academic calendar for the school year in the mail.

In the case of students that do not have access to the Internet at home, high schools can provide Internet access for them to complete the application, or provide them with a paper application. Subsequent communication would then be carried out through mail, if the preferred manner of communication of the student. As well if students do have the Internet but still prefer a physical copy of the academic calendar, the university can still provide that through the mail as well.

When the student has been accepted to the program, they will be notified via email. Course information, and the academic calendar, will be provided to the student online. The student will receive an email following their confirmation of their acceptance to the BEd program at Nipissing, Brantford, with the necessary information to allow them to create a login, and then login, to the Nipissing online registration system. Students will be able to use this system to register for courses online, change their timetable, see how many students are registered in which courses, and contact professors in their chosen courses. Students will also be able to access the syllabi for their chosen courses online, so they can plan which courses will work best together when considering assignment due dates. This information will be available through the following website: <https://my.nipissingu.ca/default.aspx>. Some of this is already available through MyNipissing, but MyNipissing will be expanded as needed.

Some of servers and storage will be moved from the North Bay campus to the Brantford campus to accommodate the new online aspect of the campus, allowing the staff at Brantford to be able to immediately deal with any issues that students may have with logging in, registration, adding or dropping courses, or any other online issue. Some servers will remain in North Bay as it is not necessary to have everything in Brantford, but a dedicated line will be created between the two campuses to ensure fast and easy access to information stored there as needed.

When the courses begin, the student will have the ability to login to the MyNipissing portal and access the content management system (CMS) that Nipissing will subscribe to, such as Blackboard WebCT. Each professor will also have their own webpage. Students will be able to use WebCT to communicate with each other, as well as the professor, outside of classroom time. Students would be able to access documents for the class online, such as lecture notes, course syllabi, information on assignments, and more through either WebCT or the class website. With WebCT students also have the ability to work together online on group collaboration assignments, as well as for sharing group presentations after the groups have presented their information in class, instead of having to physically meet together at a library. Nipissing University, in Brantford, already provides free wireless Internet for their students on campus. Having Internet access on school allows students can access their MyNipissing between classes, or research for assignments, or speak with other students via an instant messaging service and discuss their courses, and any issues that they may be having with their courses or assignments.

Students can also use the Internet to find online references, as well as information on how to properly reference their references using APA or MLA style.

MyNipissing, with the online capabilities of WebCT, will also be able to create more integration between different sections of courses by allowing both professors and students to communicate with each other. Not only would different sections of the same course at the Nipissing University Brantford campus be able to communicate with each other online and discuss their learning, but they will also be able to discuss their learning and problems with students in different sections of the same course in North Bay. This will enable professors to ensure that their courses teach the same skills and information to their students, and that the assignments they create have the same meaning and value for their students.

The student will be able to access the Internet inside the classrooms as well when needed. Additional technology that will facilitate “e-learning,” or learning with technology, within the classroom will include: projectors, as well as projection screens in all classrooms. Classrooms will also have a speaker system, enabling professors (or students giving presentations) to be able to more easily show the class relevant material, such as videos, graphic presentations, or teaching material in the classroom. Most classrooms will also include a SMART Board so that students can learn how to use it effectively in a classroom, as well as learning how to use it to teach material to their own students through using it for presentations they give to their classmates.

An additional benefit to the projection and sound system within the classroom is that now professors will have the ability to video conference when they wish. This means, for example, that if a section of the course in North Bay works on a project, they can present it to the section in Brantford, and vice versa. This also presents the opportunity that if the video conferencing equipment is good, then if they cannot find a professor for a particular course in Brantford, then a professor from the North Bay campus could teach it. This is a possibility, but more possible further into the future.

Students at Nipissing University will also find in five years’ time that professors have started to use programs such as Elluminate, or Wimba, to communicate with their class outside

of the classroom. Professors can schedule a weekly chat for their class, instead of tutorials. Professors can use these online chats, or online tutorials, to communicate with smaller groups within the class to ensure that the students are learning and understanding the material being taught to them.

When students enter into their third year they will have the opportunity to borrow a laptop from the school whenever they wish. These laptops will have all software installed that the school, as a faculty of Education, has licenses to be able to use. This will include software such as Markbook, Maplewood, various gaming, graphing, and word processing applications, and more. In this manner, the students at Nipissing will be able to learn and familiarize themselves with all software that they will later use as teachers (for marking, tracking grades, and more), and in their own classrooms. At this time, students will also be required to attend a series of tutorials on educational technology, including how to use educational software, how to monitor their Internet activity, and how to use the Internet safely in their own future classrooms. The university can also offer additional lectures on technology at this time, such as how to use SMART Boards in the classroom, as optional sessions for students who wish to know more.

#### Part 4: Implications

In order to make the changes prescribed in the factors and the vision section, the university will need to spend money to upgrade existing technologies. This could include networking electronics (routers, cables), and to buy additional technologies such as servers. The school will also need to purchase software licenses, for Elluminate or Wimba, and will need to upgrade their current CMS and transfer permissions and files over to the new (or upgraded) system. Nipissing will also have to ensure that its licenses for the public education system software (such as Maplewood) stay up to date, and are valid for installing on multiple laptops that the university owns.

Implications for professors will include the need to recreate any physical lecture notes into electronic documents. They will also need to rethink any existing course material and lectures to see about ways to incorporate technology into their teaching, or into course

assignments. Once the professors' lecture notes are made electronic, they should have an easy time organizing and categorizing their notes. This also makes it simple for professors who wish to do so to upload their notes to a class website, or to a CMS like WebCT. The choice for professors between the class website and a CMS will make the difference between making their lecture notes accessible to the general public, or only to their students. Professors will also need to be instructed on how to use certain technologies, like WebCT, the SMART Board, and projection systems. The university may need to teach the professors how to use the technology effectively first, before the professors can use it themselves, or teach their own students to use it effectively.

The role of the professor will change, and evolve. Instead of simply being at the front of the classroom, lecturing about teaching techniques, the professor will now be able to lecture about techniques, while using technology. Professors will be teaching by example. They can also be active in their students' learning, ensuring that students are understanding the material, and also the manner in which it is presented. As well, the role of a professor as one that lectures and holds office hours, but is otherwise unavailable, will change. Professors will be available online, either in real-time chat with Elluminate, Wimba, or the chat option inside of WebCT, but also in delayed time through email. Professors at Nipissing already use email, but are often very slow to respond. Communicating with students through email is not a change for them, but using additional forms of communication will be a big change.

The role of the staff at Nipissing University will also change given the new online abilities of the school. Specifically, productivity for the administration staff will be increased somewhat, as electronic form submission will result in less information needing to be entered by hand by the staff. This would be the same for not only student applications, but acceptance letters, and student registration. The university may also be able to save money, not only through the administration staff being more efficient, but also through using less paper, and sending fewer pieces of mail per student as almost all communication could be conducted via email.

Additional implications for the university also include hiring additional staff to handle the electronic part of the university. Specifically, the school will require more technical support staff

to set up and maintain the technology in the university online. Technical support would be responsible for maintaining the ability for students to apply to the university online, to register for courses, to access WebCT, and for the internal wireless network. As well, staff will need to be hired as needed to teach professors about the various technologies and how to use them. These employees could also be utilized to teach the students about using technology effectively, as described above.

Overall, the vision for the university may be ambitious, or it may not be ambitious enough. Nipissing University has never been a school to quickly accept new technology, or begin using it themselves. Instead, the school prefers to use technology that has been tested and proven useful, such as email and word processors. However, as technology improves and becomes more dominant in the everyday workings of society, it will be necessary for them to use Technology in their own teaching so that their students will feel comfortable with using it in their classrooms when they graduate and become teachers.

## Bibliography

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