

# Development of an On-Line Therapeutic Recreation Course

Funded by the Institute for Teaching and Learning, California  
State University

2003-2004

## Final Report

**Discipline:** Therapeutic Recreation

**Focus of the Initiative:** To maintain therapeutic recreation course offerings for students  
by developing the first CSU-wide online course

**Names of Participating Campuses and Faculty:**

CSU, Hayward, Dr. Melany Bailey-Spielmen  
CSU, Northridge, James Overall  
CSU, Fresno, Dr. Jody Hironaka  
CSU, San Jose, Dr. Gonzaga de Gama  
CSU, Sacramento, Dr. Jennifer Piatt  
CSU, Long Beach, Dr. Maradith Jansen  
CSU, Chico, Dr. Laura McLachlin

**Project Coordinator:**

Laura McLachlin, CSU, Chico  
Dept. of Recreation & Parks Mgmt.  
Chico, CA 95929-0560  
530-898-5227 (office)  
530-898-6557 (fax)  
[lmclachlin@csuchico.edu](mailto:lmclachlin@csuchico.edu)

**Amount of funds granted from ITL:** \$7,500

**Funds committed from other sources:** \$6,500 (Dept of Recreation & Parks  
Mgmt, CSU, Chico)

**Date:** June 24, 2004

## **Project Status:**

Significant progress on this project has been made. Accomplishments to date include:

- Numerous meetings with therapeutic recreation educators and practitioners throughout the state to review professional standards and discuss curricular design.
- Meetings with the technical staff at CSU, Chico to design and deliver curriculum via the Internet
- Review of Departments outcomes assessment data to ensure inclusion of appropriate outcomes in online course
- Survey of students and practitioners to assess satisfaction with course structure and outcomes
- Meeting with TR educators at annual conference to finalize WebCT content

While much has been done on this project, a few key areas need to be completed. Some of the modules within the online course are still under construction and the beta-test has yet to be finished.

A number of unforeseen challenges have been encountered. Two key faculty members have been on leaves, another colleague suffered an untimely death, and budget cuts severely strained the Department's ability to offer students classes in AY '03-'04. The project coordinator agreed to take on two new course preparations in fall 2003. In addition, she was successful in securing a CELT grant in fall 2003 which allowed her to develop one of the new preparations into a WebCT course during the spring 2004 term. She also coordinated a budget-mandated overhaul of the therapeutic recreation undergraduate curriculum for the next university catalog and served the campus as a Service Learning Faculty in the spring 2004 term.

Because the nature of this ITL project is discipline-dependent, few of the tasks could be delegated to student assistants until the course conceptualization was complete. The majority of the work necessitates expertise of therapeutic recreation professionals. A large amount of time was spent in discussions with fellow educators and professionals reviewing curriculum standards, assessing existing curriculum, and identifying ways to deliver content via the Internet.

In addition, the project coordinator needed to learn how to use WebCT to deliver the course content. Time was spent reviewing existing on-line courses, meeting with fellow faculty who teach using distance-learning technology, and identifying mechanisms for transferring current curriculum into an online format.

The WebCT components of the therapeutic recreation course are currently under construction. The project coordinator's plans are to complete the course by mid-semester and beta-test the course in the latter part of fall 2004.

The goals, intent, and rationale of the original proposal are unchanged and will be accomplished. The creation of an online course will allow students across the CSU system to complete their degrees in a timely fashion and in a way that will qualify them for professional certification. The faculty members of this project will continue their work through fall '04-spring '05. Of the \$7,500 granted, none of the monies have yet been spent. Approval of funds to be spent during the '04-'05 AY has been obtained from both the Department and Chancellor's office.

---

### **Problem and how it relates to teaching and/or curriculum:**

Therapeutic recreation (TR), a process by which recreation services are provided to individuals with disabilities to enhance their well being, is taught at 11 California State University (CSU) campuses (<http://www.recreationtherapy.com/>). Because TR is a highly specialized area of study, class sizes tend to be small (6-24) compared to other courses within the departments. However, nearly 98% of students graduating from CSU TR programs find jobs within the field working with youth, elderly, and individuals with disabilities. Through the provision of TR services hospital stays are reduced, medical complications and the need for medication is minimized, independent living skills are enhanced, and many other positive benefits are realized. (Specific benefits of therapeutic recreation for many different populations, including cost benefits can be accessed at <http://www.ncrta.org/Professional/benefits.htm#physical%20disabilities>).

As the CSU enters another deep cycle of budget cuts, course design and delivery must be altered in historically low enrollment situations if we are to maintain the quality of our undergraduate programs. Unfortunately, smaller programs like TR are finding their course offerings increasingly constrained as resources are re-allocated to meet FTE targets and obligations to advising patterns with larger numbers of students per faculty member.

A critical issue related to TR curriculum is the accreditation process administered by the National Council on Therapeutic Recreation Certification (NCTRC) ([www.nctrc.org](http://www.nctrc.org)). In response to state budget cuts, most of California's TR programs are being forced to reduce the number of courses offered, thus impacting the quality of therapeutic recreation education. Specifically, reductions in the number of TR course offerings can threaten students' ability to become professionally certified. To be viable in a broad range of job settings, graduates in TR need to be certified. The national certifying agency, NCTRC, requires therapeutic recreation graduates to take four specific courses in TR in order to be certified. Therefore, the curriculum must provide at least these four essential classes. To adhere to NCTRC requirements and respond to decreasing budget allocations, TR educators have joined together to offer the first CSU-wide online TR course. This will retain student's ability to complete their degree in a timely fashion and in a way that will qualify them for professional certification while at the same time reducing the need to teach low-enrollment courses at multiple campuses.

## Plan for addressing the need:

Six TR colleagues across the CSU campuses requested course re-design support to develop the first CSU-wide online therapeutic recreation course. This proposal requires WebCT support of self-paced, outcomes-based learning environments for students. On campuses where this course can no longer be offered in a traditional fashion, it will become available at regular intervals, thus adding permanent capacity to participating Departments, potentially offering more course selections for students in TR programs, and increasing service outreach to local communities.

This proposal, for curricular re-design, would enhance *quality* and *productivity*. Because of the support from ITL, a necessary therapeutic recreation course will be retained and made available. TR students will be able to complete the four courses and an internship required for NCTRC in four academic semesters rather than the five or six it currently takes, adding a new measure of productivity to the TR curriculum. Accountability, another quality factor, will be increased via self-paced, competency-based learning modules delivered and documented via WebCT's powerful evaluation tools. Since the TR advising patterns are fairly small, the current TR faculty should be able to support students in the WebCT mediated class through regularly scheduled office hours and several face-to-face sessions with the students concurrently enrolled in other classes taught by TR faculty.

## Modified Project Timeline:

Date	Task	Status
October 2003	Met with TLP staff at CSU, Chico to get selected WebCT components online for Fall 2004 Consulted with TLP to complete preliminary planning for Spring 2004 WebCT TR course	Complete
November 2003	TR educators met at the California Society of Park and Recreation Educators Conference to identify curricular content and deliverables Reviewed NCTRC and CBRPC professional competencies to ensure inclusion of appropriate standards/competencies in WebCT TR course Reviewed each Departments outcomes assessment data to ensure inclusion of appropriate outcomes in TR course	Complete
December 2003	Interviewed instructors, field professionals and students to assess satisfaction with course structure and outcomes	Complete
Jan/Feb 2004	Used WebCT's powerful evaluation and assessment features to assess selected standards/outcomes/competencies	Complete
March/April 2004	TR educators met at the California Parks and Recreation Society Convention to begin developing WebCT content for TR class to be offered in Fall 2004	Complete
May/June 2004	Collected feedback from students, TR educators, and field professionals to design TR course	Complete
July/August 2004	Build content into WebCT course	
Sept/Oct 2004	Beta-test TR content, via an independent study course and 3-5 senior TR students who will not be on campus in Fall 2004	
Nov/Dec 2004	Revise and finalize WebCT course	

## Project Budget:

	<b>ITL Requests</b>	<b>DRPM* Match</b>	<b>Justification</b>
Travel & Stipend, Project Coordinator		\$1,000	CA. Society of Park & Recr Educators Conference & CA Park Recr Society Annual Conference
Supplies	\$250		
Student Assistant course design & development	\$3,420		12/hr x 19 hours/week x 15 weeks for Sp '04 (Student Employment has approved this rate)
Student Assistant course design & development	\$3,420		12/hr x 19 hours/week x 15 weeks for Sp '04 (Student Employment has approved this rate)
Benefits	\$342.00		Benefits @ 5% of S & W
Other		\$500	
Specialized Software	\$500		Charting & documentation software (medserve.com)
Computer		\$5,000	
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$7,932.00</b>	<b>\$6,500</b>	

\* California State University, Chico  
Department of Recreation and Parks Management