

Texas Learning Consortium
Concordia University Texas; Lubbock Christian University; Schreiner University;
Texas Lutheran University; Texas Wesleyan University

Grant Period: July 1, 2014 – June 30, 2017

Program Summary (2018): The Texas Language Consortium (TLC) was launched in 2012 as an innovative project to share world language courses across campuses. In 2016, with the prospect of adding new consortial members and expanding disciplines beyond world languages, the TLC became the Texas *Learning* Consortium. The TLC is currently an inter-institutional collaboration of five private universities in Texas: Concordia University Texas, Lubbock Christian University, Schreiner University, Texas Lutheran University, and Texas Wesleyan University. The Consortium uses HD video-conferencing technology and other online tools to share courses among participating institutions in a blended learning environment, integrating distance learners with face-to-face classrooms in real time. The current TLC curriculum consists of not only language courses such as Chinese, French, German, Greek, Latin, Portuguese, and Spanish, but also courses in Engineering and Religion Studies.

Successes: The Texas Learning Consortium has developed through two program phrases (Nanfito, 2017). The initial phase, 2011-2014, constituted a “proof-of-concept” effort to establish a new “informal consortium”. The next three years, 2014-2017, with the grant support from the Teagle Foundation, was defined as the second phrase to “operationalize the proof-of-concept”. TLC has transitioned from a project that the chief academic officers at five institutions to a program owned by constituents at each institution. It has matured as an organization with developed programmatic processes to manage the operations of the consortium.

The TLC program has experienced persistent expansion since 2012 when there were 4 courses, 4 faculty, and 18 students in the program. By the Spring of 2017, those numbers swelled to 11 courses, 7 faculty, and 70 students. In Fall 2018, there will be 9 faculty teaching 13 courses through TLC. The disciplines of courses shared also have grown from four foreign languages to seven, plus an Engineering course and a Theology course. There has also been extensive discussion on establishing a consortial Engineering program in the future.

The factors contributed to the success includes strong buy-ins from stakeholders, retaining an external consultant who worked with the coordinator to provide project management support, finding motivated and engaging faculty, increased organizational commitment and community support, higher level of trust and shared resources, the longevity of efforts from

all constituent groups, and continuing enthusiasm to innovate with creative ideas and projects.

Challenges: One of the most important challenges is continuing to work through logistical issues and ensuring communications among all stakeholders. There are several endeavors that have helped to address the challenges.

With the help of our consultant, the TLC Communications Plan was developed in 2017. The plan describes Who in the TLC needs to know What, When, and How- via what communication media. It also established a communication calendar, listing activities that occur on regular schedules such as course enrollment periods and semester start and end dates. The Communication plan serves to satisfy two specific requirements: a) establishing project communication protocols, and b) using communication protocols and resources, and the project teams, to demonstrate and reinforce to all participants where programs and resources intersect and how and where participants fit in the TLC program.

The development of the project teams (Technology, Pedagogy, and Curriculum Development and Assessment) has been a great help with operations and growth of the program. Those cross-institutional leaderships and memberships make this virtual organization work closely and provide great support for faculty who teach the TLC courses. The annual in-person retreat has also been an important event to cultivate relationships among consortial members, thus contributing to our ongoing success.

Sustainability: The prospects for sustaining the work in the post-grant period is very promising. It is an expected component on each campus with continuing support from leadership. To sustain the TLC program, all universities have to see the value of course sharing and commitment to share resources. Sufficient buy-in needs to remain from all member institutions. A financial exit strategy was developed outlining the transition away from a grant-funded project support to a financially responsible and sustainable program. We have put practices in place to institutionalize the Texas Learning Consortium and we expect it to continue and grow.

Reference:

Nanfito, M. (2017) *Texas Learning Consortium: Working Together in the Lone Star State*. Case Study: 2011-2017.