

ITS Training Services

Training Report

Winter-Fest 2009

General Findings:

Winter-Fest 2009 was held January 5-9. Data recorded from Public-Free training sessions offered during this week are included in this report.

A total of 28 training sessions on 26 topics (see Appendix A) were offered by 16 instructors and 1 vendor. The number of training sessions offered during this Fest was reduced to about half of the number of training sessions offered last year to provide a more distinct focus on the needs of the target audience, faculty and graduate students.

Winter-Fest 2009 focused mainly on the traditional Fest offerings, such as EndNote, Penn State specific tools, such as Wikispaces, and technologies for teaching, such as ANGEL. Six Overview sessions, presented both face-to-face and via Adobe Connect were added to the original schedule to provide more free training opportunities for participants at all campus locations. A Digital Media Day, comprised of three topic sessions, was added to the schedule to offer the faculty target audience ways to experience how digital media can be used to engage learners.

There were 470 total registrations and 252 total attendees. Based on total registrations, this is the highest percentage attendance for a Fest within the past year, with 54% of registrants attending. However, Winter-Fest 2009 also showed the lowest overall number of attendees for a Fest in the past year due in part to the lower number of offerings. The no show rate was 17% of total registrations which is slightly higher than the most recent Fest. Graduate students, one of the targeted audiences for this Fest, made up the majority of the no shows as they have consistently done during Fest periods. The cancellation rate was 26% of the total registrations, which is a decrease from last year and is the lowest rate seen for any Fest over the past year. Though significant, the cancellation rate is as an indicator that many registrants are cancelling when they know they will be unable to attend instead of not showing up to a training session.

The average attendance per training session was 9, which is a bit lower than Winter-Fest 2008, yet consistent with the most recent reporting periods. The top five training sessions for total attendance were as follows: ANGEL: Course Gradebook, ANGEL: Start Using ANGEL in Your Course Right Away, Using Web 2.0 Technologies in the Classroom (presented face-to-face and via Adobe Connect), Building PDF Portfolios with Acrobat 9, and Podcasting Overview (presented face-to-face and via Adobe Connect). There were additional sections of the ANGEL topics added to accommodate need indicated by high registration numbers. Winter-Fest 2009 met the training needs of faculty and graduate students with these popular titles and a refined list of other topics that have an appeal for these groups.

Faculty and graduate students comprised 65% of the attendees, with faculty making up the bulk of attendees with 44% of the overall attendance. Targeted marketing efforts to these audiences along with thoughtful scheduling can be credited for the largest portion of attendees coming from the intended groups. 33% of attendees were staff, and the remaining 2% of attendees were undergraduate students and researchers.

Due to the number of offerings presented via Adobe Connect, there was a larger audience from beyond University Park than there has been in the past. Of those attending sessions during this Fest, 15% were from locations other than University Park. Attendees from 13 locations including Abington, Altoona, Brandywine, Dickinson School of Law, DuBois, Erie, Greater Allegheny, Harrisburg, Lehigh Valley, Mont Alto, Schuylkill, State College Continuing Education, and York participated in training. Most of these attendees took part in the sessions that were offered via Adobe Connect which allowed them to be present for training while at their locations.

Overall, Winter-Fest 2009 was successful in providing a variety of training opportunities and mediums for the intended audience. Only 1 scheduled session was cancelled due to low registrations, indicated by fewer than 5 registered. Marketing efforts were successful in relaying this training opportunity to the intended audience. The audience showed up for the Penn State and teaching-specific sessions and appeared to appreciate the alternative presentation medium available through use of Adobe Connect.

Analysis & Recommendations

The time period between the Winter break and the start of the Spring semester presents a unique opportunity for providing training for certain audiences, such as faculty and graduate students, who may not otherwise be able to attend training during the regular semester. Awareness of topic popularity, trends, and the technology training needs of the intended audience are important considerations for planning and carrying out Winter-Fest successfully. Though the weather can be unpredictable and the timing can be challenging, this time period remains ideal for training sessions that focus on Penn State tools and teaching with technology.

The target audience for Fests during breaks between academic semesters has been defined as faculty and graduate students. These groups continue to emerge as an audience that is able to benefit from the training that is offered during Fest periods. This was the case during Winter-Fest 2009, as two-thirds of attendees were faculty and graduate students. The unique schedules of these groups must be considered when planning training directed towards them, and the Fests provide a time for training when no credit courses are being offered. During the Fall, a faculty technology training listserv was started to provide information on training opportunities that would be of interest to instructors. This listserv has been growing consistently and to date has 145 members. Continued communication efforts with the Graduate School and Graduate Student Association have opened up channels for announcing training opportunities for graduate students. Further fostering relationships with these groups will allow us to provide further information about our services and policies to the target audience. Investigating the needs of the overall target audience will help us to have continued success with Winter-Fest as well as other Fest offerings. Winter-Fest 2009 focused on a clearly defined target audience and topics that directly reflected the technology training needs of that audience.

Investigating topics that are in demand for the Fest audience is an important ongoing process as the list of Penn State systems used in instruction and the available technologies for teaching continue to change and grow. During Winter-Fest 2009, this was particularly important as the schedule of offerings changed a great deal from the offerings of 2008. The focus was refined to include topics that deal directly with tools that can assist in teaching and learning. This focus appeared to pay off in attracting the target audience to the sessions. A Digital Media Day was added this year to introduce instructors to ways that technology can be used to engage learners. Several sessions were offered both face-to-face and via Adobe Connect to reach out to participants University-wide with the topics they need. Continuing to evaluate and select the

best topics and presentations mediums for the intended audience is important in continued success of the Fests.

The weather will seemingly always be a factor when evaluating Winter-Fest. This year, in particular, the weather did appear to make it more difficult for registrants to attend training sessions. This can be seen in the number of registrant cancellations. The timing of this Fest also posed a hurdle seeing as the sessions took place fairly immediately after the University opened for the new year. In the past, there was at least a few days time between when the University reopened and the Fest began, which provided extra time for registration. We can't stop impending weather and it is difficult to reschedule around it to keep all registrants on rosters, so the best that can be done is to consider that this will always be a factor in Winter-Fest. The timing of the academic calendar is also out of our control, so we must strive to make the best of the given situation. Overall and despite the challenges, Winter-Fest does provide a needed service for the certain audience in University community during a time when they are more likely to attend technology training sessions.

Appendix A

Training Session Topic	Overall Attendance
ANGEL: Course Gradebook	19
ANGEL: Start Using ANGEL in Your Course Right Away	18
Using Web 2.0 Technologies in the Classroom (face-to-face & via Adobe Connect)	17
Building PDF Portfolios with Acrobat 9	16
Podcasting Overview (face-to-face & via Adobe Connect)	15
Getting Started with Blogs at Penn State	12
PowerPoint 2007: Customizing a Presentation	12
Using Blogs in the Classroom (face-to-face & via Adobe Connect)	12
EndNote: The Basics	11
SPSS: The Basics	11
Using Media in ANGEL to Engage Generation Y Learners (a component of Digital Media Day)	11
Using Penn State's Wikispaces in the Classroom (face-to-face & via Adobe Connect)	11
Using Connect Pro in the Classroom (face-to-face & via Adobe Connect)	10
Videoconferencing in the Classroom (face-to-face & via Adobe Connect)	9
e-Portfolio Essentials at Penn State	8
Getting Started with Penn State Wikispaces	7
PDF Collaboration with Adobe Acrobat 9	7
Penn State Thesis Template	7
PowerPoint 2007: Enhancing and Packaging a Presentation	7
Digital Media: Start to Finish (a component of Digital Media Day)	6
Getting Started with Adobe Connect	6
Using Google Docs for Collaborative Creation	6
Getting Started with Podcasting	4
Tools of the Digital Arts: Creating and Compositing a Digital Image with Multiple Graphics Applications	4
Using Adobe Connect in the Classroom	4
Getting Started with Videoconferencing	2