



The Internet is quickly becoming the most powerful classroom. With unlimited, anytime access to information, it's no surprise that online learning is "where it's at" in education. People are going back to school without the confines of traditional schedules or classroom walls and universities are moving quickly to keep up with demand for web-based training, teaching and connections. The National Center for Education Statistics is again reporting the continued, upward trend of users accessing both online courses and online community modules from both public and private two- and four-year universities. Duke University and its School of Medicine are no exception.

IONA was brought in to assist the **Duke University Medical Center's Division of Community Health** and that division's Department of Community Health and Family Medicine with three online learning websites and modules. Although each project had its own challenges and desired results, they shared similarities in wanting to bridge active learning and information sharing between internal users and various external communities.

Online Learning Project Profiles

Pathways in Caring (Caregivers) provides a collaborative program for individuals who identify themselves as caregivers and is a joint offering through Duke University Medical Center and the University of South Carolina School of Medicine. The site's purpose is to educate and train caregivers while providing a platform they could use remotely to improve care. The site has a clear training and health education component.

<http://caregivers.mc.duke.edu>

Duke's Learning Together program offers an opportunity to get involved in real-life, health-related projects in the community. All Duke Health Science learners, as well as students from other academic disciplines, are able to participate. The site serves as a learning community while offering a systematic platform for sharing training information and a catalog of immediate community health needs. <http://learningtogether.duhs.duke.edu>

Duke Community Health Training Module formalizes the registration, training and assignment process required for Duke medical professionals and students to conduct

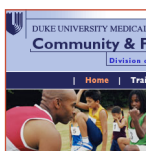
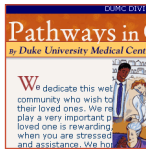
work and health screenings in the community. Without participation standards, Duke's risk management lawyers were concerned about malpractice insurance coverage and liability. The formal step-by-step approach couples multiple teaching components to create a robust teaching environment for both professionals and the hundreds of students required to complete community-based work each semester. <http://cbtraining.duhs.duke.edu/>

Challenges

Like most projects, design, development and technology requirements either grow out of a "need" or someone simply having a good idea. Duke's Division of Community Health had both in knowing that it wanted to use the web to better share community health information and engage students, community caregivers and interested volunteers across multiple disciplines.

In 2002, Duke wanted to offer basic community health training to people who identified themselves as caregivers via the web. The Caregiver project was born and Tia Simmons, Duke's Medical Instructor within the Division of Community Health, was responsible for leading web efforts.

1





Putting curricula on the web seemed simple enough. Like other departments, Simmons had a lot of content, but working with internal resources offered limited flexibility and we couldn't control updates and edits. "We knew we had to create a platform that would be easy to use and foster participation while 'looking' like something a family member or community volunteer would want to. If we could do that, then our site would become a resource for learning and information sharing," said Simmons. In addition, Simmons was trying to attract non-traditional users... rural, older folks. "We essentially asked IONA to design a website for my grandma."

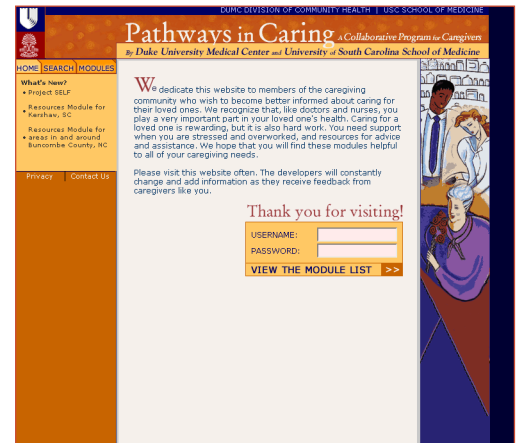
For the Learning Together site, which came after Caregivers' development, Duke wanted to push the community learning envelope, but it had to address the Division's issue of just getting the word out about community health opportunities. The program is a community-based service opportunity founded on Duke's the belief that working with the community

2

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Tia Simmons, Medical Instructor within Duke's Division of Community Health, Learning Together website

and placing those needs and interest first, then involving learners will create a reciprocal experience that benefits all. IONA was called on to convey these "institutional feelings" through design while ensuring the Learning



<http://caregivers.mc.duke.edu>

Together module looked like part of Duke's Community Health "family."

The Community Health Training Module would become a key component connected to various community health opportunities.

Duke had created an internal application for the module, but it was expensive to maintain and cumbersome offering little flexibility to the Community Health employees - like Assistant Professor Gwen Murphy, Ph.D., MS, LDN - looking to leverage the site to register students for community health projects.

Murphy explained that the department's chair wanted a way to encourage and train students from multiple health disciplines to participate in community-based health programs. This website was going to become the integral part of how Duke managed information and participation. "We needed a platform we could tweak at will, continuous added training information and have a database for verification," said Murphy. "We had to have a design and technology partner that could help us realize these goals... and grow."

All of the Community Health projects required flexible solutions that offered internal content control and didn't mean a phone



call to technical support every time a change was made. "We had to be able to grow our programs through user demand as well as our own content," said Simmons.

Answers

IONA applies its proven, systematic design and development process to all projects. This offered an early success during the Caregivers project.

“ IONA’s willingness to listen, run with my ideas, offer options that I would have never thought about and then execute made the Caregivers project a success.”

Tia Simmons, Medical Instructor within Duke’s Division of Community Health, Learning Together website

"I remember initially sitting down and telling IONA my ideas, then they shared their process. I didn't realize how important 'look' would be," said Simmons. "Their willingness to listen, run with my ideas, offer options that I would have never thought about and then execute made the Caregivers project a success," said Simmons.

Both the Caregivers and Learning Together sites demanded simple, point-and-click navigation with intuitive layers. They also needed a look that was warm and inviting to individual caregivers and community organizers.

IONA came through - even developing the Learning Together logo - with sites that were welcoming and incorporated elements from Duke's existing Community Health sites. "The impressive part of working with IONA

is that they listened to my idea on service learning (with Learning Together) and they came back with the beginnings of a site. They understood technology that would help me later own when the site grew... something I didn't know how to address, and knew how to layout a site that students would use and external users could navigate."

IONA had to work with internal Duke IT resources on the Community Health Training Module project. "IONA had to interact with our webmaster," said Murphy.

"I was so impressed with how they became a team player and were able to maintain the outside voice that we had hired offering the expertise that made the module more than we expected."

Both Simmons and Murphy note that IONA clear process, experience and open communication helped the projects run smoothly. "IONA was always available - both Amy Robbins and Mike Warwick (IONA's Directors) - were responsive on the phone and great with email." Simmons commented on the team environment that was created and IONA guided her "every step of the way." Murphy added, "I always knew I would get the help I needed when I called or fired off an email."





Results

Successful work with Duke's Caregivers site is what ultimately led to the repeat projects for the Learning Together project and the Community Health Training Module and the Learning Together project.

"IONA took the Learning Together concept and my 'not sure what I want' direction and ran with it. The result was better than my vision," said Simmons. In addition to the easy-to-administer and update sites, IONA also provided Duke with training and on-going support that empowered growth and changes based on user-demand.

Duke currently estimates that more than ___ users login to the Caregivers site each (month or year) and it has become a resource that sets Duke's Community Health program apart.

"We now have a stamp with the Learning Together URL and we put it on everything. Interest starting growing and it's still one of our Division's busiest sites," said Simmons. Ongoing users and sustainability is another success for both Duke and IONA. "IONA built the site so that it scales easily. We



<http://chtraining.duhs.duke.edu/>

haven't had any problems adding more and more users and increasing our information," said Simmons.

The Community Health Training Module has become a showcase element for Duke. Murphy commented that the school's department chair has "offered the module to people all over the country" as an example of how to systematically engage university health professionals and students to get involved in their community's health. Since the module was launched, more than ___ health professionals have used the site for training.

"Through my IONA experience, they've got me interested in online learning opportunities that I wouldn't have even thought about. We may even start offering some of our curriculum in Spanish," said Simmons.

“I was so impressed with how IONA became a team player and were able to maintain the outside voice that we had hired offering the expertise that made the module more than we expected.”

Gwen Murphy, Ph.D., MS, LDN, Assistant Professor within Duke's Division of Community Health, Community Health Training Module

* Source: Distance Education at Degree-Granting Postsecondary Institutions: 2006-2007, National Center for Education Statistics, <http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2009/2009044.pdf>