

MCTE 628, Instructional Systems Design

*Portfolio #2: Survey for Assessment of Skills and Knowledge
Needed in Nova's CTE Programs in 1999:
Submitted as Alternative to MCTE 628 Midterm Examination*

Course: MCTE 628 — Instructional Systems Design
Subject: Assignment #2 from MCTE 628 Professor Options, Winter 1999
Title: Portfolio #2: Survey for Assessment of Skills and Knowledge
Needed in Nova's CTE Programs in 1999:
Submitted as Alternative to MCTE 628 Midterm Examination
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Assessment Question

What are the prerequisite skills for successful functioning as an online CTE student in 1999?

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By Leanne C. Boyd

Overall Assessment of Skills and Knowledge Needed at Nova:

FIRST AND FOREMOST, both Nova Southeastern University -- and students -- need to keep in mind that this is a Computer Science degree program. MORE than basic computing skills is called for. For me, the application and portfolio submitted for acceptance into the program led me to think that the requirements were much more stringent than they really are. There have been many peers who do NOT have sufficient skill levels to enter this program. They struggle, and come to rely on students who do have the skills. Many drop out of the courses; others become proficient very quickly.

Personal Setup of Home Computing Workstation, Commentary, Suggestions:

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| Computer environment, including OS | <ul style="list-style-type: none">Initially Windows 95; changed to Windows 98 in August 1998, due to change in computer system to Dell Inspiron laptopSome work was done in Windows NT 4, at workIt is my opinion that a "stand" should be made by the school. This was done in my undergraduate studies. MSCD is totally PC-based. This was difficult, required purchasing a new computer, and ended up ... being the best computing happenstance of my life, in computers. Defining the platforms for the school studies will help improve student participation and performance. Much time is lost by professors in assessment, as well as students while attempting to "jive" different operating systems. It adversely affects student group work.Students need to KNOW their operating system. Some type of assessment in orientation needs to happen, to ensure that students are familiar with their OS, such as WinHelp, MS-DOS, some small "handshake-ability" with basic UNIX principles (for use with Telnet, which is a free offering in the Office Suite, and mandatory for Nova use), and literally hundreds of other functions.Nova AND students need to keep in mind that this is a COMPUTER SCIENCE degree. Insufficiencies should call for prerequisite courses, as demanded by other universities. |
| Browser used | <ul style="list-style-type: none">I began with Netscape version 3.x (several versions; I upgrade as they offer them). Part of orientation needs to assess student level of installing new versions of software, especially the critical need for staying current with browsers.Netscape version 4.x; am currently on latest version, 4.5. I believe it is imperative to stay current, as new Plugins offer many new abilities for research and document creation.Also: Microsoft Internet Explorer, currently version 4.72.3110 (this came with Dell computer). I use both browsers in my work as well as studies, to verify the look and navigation on both browsers.Students, in orientation, need to be assessed for abilities such as Search Engine searches, Listserv abilities, and other search functions. This will become crucial to their studies, and many students are not prepared. |
| Internet Service Provider (ISP) | <ul style="list-style-type: none">Began with Denver company, Stonehenge. Student should be prepared to compare ISPs and be willing to change. Our online environment demands speed of download and helpful services. Local does not always mean the best.Currently (for over one year) with EARTHLINK (based in CA). Excellent ISP with much online help. My usercode is boydzoo. My email address is boydzoo@earthlink.net.Students need to know what services are provided by their ISP. Many times, the answers are provided by the ISP, when even the Nova computing staff is not prepared to answer questions. For instance, Earthlink has VAST help pages for web page creation, tutorials (in computer languages, navigating the Web, working with your computer). These are in-depth and very useful. This information needs to be explored at Orientation.Choose the ISP partially for how much space is provided for a website, as Nova offers so little room (1000KB/1MB only). This website has become critical for my pathway in the courses. As Web technologies advance, along with Nova's use of them, this will be ever more important. |

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| Other information, including Shareware such as Zip, Stuffit, WS_FTP | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • With 10 strong years of computing experience, which often led me to be able to "tweak" a slower modem, the subject of modems and Nova courses is CRITICAL. I began with a 14.4Kbps internal modem in a Pentium 100 Packard Bell. In August 1998, I began use of a 56Kbps modem on the Dell. Students should know that this is probably a MINIMUM standard for the modem. I am now considering ISDN or cable. • Software choice is crucial. A larger emphasis in the orientation of new students needs to be made concerning choice of an integrated package. I would go even further, and make the latest version of Office (as it is so global, already), the standard. • Shareware and Freeware. These choices make a huge difference in how projects are completed. Nova orientation needs to place emphasis on this, and provide a definitive, although ever-changing list of these. An online listing would be easy to maintain, and be essential for student use. |
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Nova Offerings, Crucial to Success in CTE Programs:

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| Internet or Web-Based Course of Study, Telnet | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nova has been a totally web-based course of study, for me. I also participated in telnet classrooms (ECT), but that isn't being used very much lately. In my opinion, going entirely to Web offerings is important. The ECT provided a chance to exchange ideas, but is very slow. Telnetting into Nova is difficult, as not enough instruction has been given for those who aren't familiar with it. |
| Course Schedules, Posting of Books and Other Requirements | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most universities post upcoming schedules far in advance. Nova has, in the past, posted classes very, VERY late. Sometimes, teachers and books required are posted at the last minute. I feel strongly that this needs some organization. Course schedules for at least the next two terms, plus the current term, need to be given online. Students cannot plan, without them. |
| Graduate Student Forums | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The GSF is perhaps the best offering in Nova's online environment. This allows students to get to know one another, exchange ideas, and participate in helping one another. It is not "synchronous," but comes awfully close!! I have been able to have almost "live" conversations with peers. |
| Electronic Student, and Electronic Teacher (ESET) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Second only to the GSF, the ESET has been a HUGE advancement for the submission and grading of student works. As time has gone by, I realize that all courses and grades remain in each student's "area" of ESET. One peer was able to recover a project that was lost in the crash of his PC. |
| Electronic Library | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MORE EMPHASIS needs to be placed on the Electronic Library. After more than a year in Nova studies, I finally got over my fear of this environment (yes, ME!) and had books sent to my home. For one thing, I was not aware that this was a choice that would be "free." The fact that Nova pays for shipping library books is terrific, and takes the burden of cost off the student. |
| Chatroom | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Other than the Moderator, and more difficult-to-use chat services when one uses Telnet, Nova is deficient in this area. There are many excellent programs that need to be researched, such as Netscape/AOL's AIM, the worldwide ICQ, and many ISPs are now offering chat areas. All of these INVITE participation by educational facilities, for chatrooms specifically set up for courses. |
| The MODERATOR | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For me, the Moderator held the greatest promise for synchronous communication for professors and students. Only Dr. Fornshell has used this. I understand there are problems with the software/hardware setup, and it did not always work right. HOWEVER!! Let me say that Dr. Fornshell's use of Moderator was the FIRST time I was able to overcome barriers and actually get to know my peers. This was a couple of terms into my time at Nova. But, we were able to relate in real time, which allowed the walls to go down. Nova needs to find a way to get this tool working very well. It is my opinion that it is the best current technology has to offer for distance programs. |

Word of Conclusion:

Unfortunately, one of the basic "skills" needed for Nova courses is a "hard hide" and an ability to deal with people in various departments within the school, such as Financial Aid. It is my belief that Nova will never know how many students have been lost to the inefficiencies of the administrative departments at the school. This cannot be a "skill" offered to Orientation students, but an advance knowledge of possible problems could be given, as well as a "map" that would give contacts, phone numbers, email addresses. This has been HARD-EARNED and LEARNED information, for me, for the past five terms. The Website pages are seriously deficient in offering these bits of navigational information. Perhaps Orientation might include visits by principle people from Financial Aid, Bursar's Office, the Registrar, etc. One VERY REAL lack at Nova has been that of not having an assigned counselor in these areas. The student is TOLD they have counselors, but that has not happened, for the overall quick changes in personnel. Believe it or not, this has become the PRIMARY challenge of my time at Nova. I see this as wrong; the course of studies needs to be prominent.