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The Student Technology Assistants (STA) Program: A progress report

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New Chalk Talk

The Center for Learning and Teaching Newsletter
Teaching News

The Center for Learning and Teaching
Academic Center, Room 212A
Tel. 20.2.797.6659, clt@aucegypt.edu

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The Student Technology Assistants (STA) Program A progress report

In a study conducted last year entitled “Computer use by Faculty and Students at the American University in Cairo: An ethnographic approach” (Sept. 2002), the authors, Dr M. Peterson (Anthropology) and Dr E. Coker (Psychology) concluded that:

*“... most [AUC] faculty express an interest in wanting to learn ICT [Information Communications Technology], but they are concerned about the time it takes. Every non-user mentioned a lack of time to learn the technologies, and a lack of time to perform the implementation. Rather than attending workshops or classes, faculty say they want to learn ICT strategies **on their own schedules, at their own pace, and with minimal staff contact time** (our emphasis). But when they need the staff, they want them there with the answers or resources immediately.”*

Responding to these concerns, and recognizing that there is an untapped pool of student talent and skill on our campus, the Center for Learning and Teaching (CLT) embarked on a pilot “**Student Technology Assistants**” (STA) program last fall (2002).

The Center has hired graduate students and has trained them (with the collaboration of Academic Computing Services), to assist interested faculty members in preparing instructional materials and/or using WebCT (the course management system adopted by AUC). This has involved assisting faculty members, on a one-on-one basis, “*at their own pace and on their own schedules*”, on how to use and develop these tools in and out of the classroom. In other words, our STAs have made the equivalent of “house calls” to our faculty.

The services offered are in the following areas:

- a) WebCT: one-on-one training and uploading of course material (text, images, PPT slides, grades etc)
- b) One-on-one training and preparation of Powerpoint presentations
- c) Scanning of slides and instructional materials

Twenty seven faculty members participated in the program and were assisted by seven graduate students. The number of participating faculty members and their corresponding departments are shown in Table I where:

HUSS = School of Humanities and Social Sciences
BEC = School of Business, Economics and Communication
S & E = School of Sciences and Engineering

SCHOOL	HUSS		BEC		S & E	
DEPARTMENT	<i>Philosophy</i>	1	<i>Economics</i>	4	<i>Biology</i>	5
	<i>Political Science</i>	1	<i>Journalism and Mass Comm.</i>	2	<i>Chemistry</i>	1
	<i>SAPE</i>	3	<i>Management</i>	1	<i>Engineering: Construction</i>	2
					<i>Engineering: Electronics</i>	1
					<i>Engineering: Mechanical</i>	1
					<i>Mathematics</i>	1
					<i>Physics</i>	4
<i>Represents the # of participating Faculty Members</i>						

Table I.

Results of survey

<i>Example of Survey Questions</i>	<i>Strongly agree</i>	<i>agree</i>	<i>disagree</i>	<i>Strongly disagree</i>	<i>No opinion</i>
<i>I would not have used WebCT this semester w/o this help</i>	60%	27%	9%	4%	0%
<i>I feel that I have explored more features of WebCT than I expected</i>	43.5%	52%	4.5%	0%	0%
<i>The assistance I received was very helpful</i>	89%	11%	0%	0%	0%
<i>I found the appointments with my STA convenient</i>	70.5%	29.5%	0%	0%	0%
<i>I would recommend this program to a colleague</i>	81.5%	18.5%	0%	0%	0%

To the question: “On the whole how would you evaluate this program?” the following are some of the answers given:

- “Excellent” (9),
- “Extremely helpful” to “very useful” or “very good” (7)
- “Highly recommended. My compliments....”
- “Outstanding”
- “5 on a 5 point scale”
- “Much needed. The excellent facilities at the Center make it a real draw. I also appreciate the enthusiasm of all the staff I have dealt w/ at the Center...”
- “Terrific...”
- “Extremely convenient”

Given the high degree of faculty satisfaction, the Center for Learning and Teaching will continue to expand and develop the STA Program.

Faculty members interested in finding out more about this semester’s STA program should be on the lookout for our email announcement very soon.

Please send comments or suggestions to allozy@aucegypt.edu