Creating and Using the Collaborative Telelearning Environment

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TUTORIAL 3

CREATING AND USING THE COLLABORATIVE TELELEARNING ENVIRONMENT

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This tutorial will examine the critical educational and research issues in the design, implementation, and continuous evolution of distributed collaborative telelearning environments.

Attendees can expect to leave with an understanding of (1) the current learning theories and evidence driving the push for technology-supported collaborative learning; (2) how communications media and process support technologies relate to theories of learning; (3) which types of technology investments are advantages and why; (4) the formidable technical, institutional, and especially interinstitutional obstacles in creating collaborative telelearning environments; and (5) the immediate research issues guiding the investigation of telelearning.

The long-standing paradigm of delivering learning through classroom “teaching” is premised on the notion of “place” and institutional boundaries. The pervasiveness of rich communication and instructional systems to span time and distance are challenging these premises by enabling new ways to support the active construction of knowledge through collaborative learning. At the same time, governments and stakeholders are mandating more widespread access, relevance, and especially results from their educational investments. Faced with these trends, institutions and educators are called on to make tough choices regarding the technology and program investments that can truly deliver on the promise of learning across distance.

Collaborative telelearning environments differ from distance teaching technologies (e.g., two-way classroom TV) through their focus on facilitating rich collaboration (i.e., via audio, video, and data) between distant learners for the active construction of knowledge. Research has demonstrated that collaborative learning is more desirable and effective than traditional learning methods (i.e., largely lecture). The continuing emergence of low cost, high capacity bandwidth is enabling the implementation of point-to-point and multi-point, rich collaborative telelearning environments, yet there are formidable institutional barriers to understanding, constructing, and effectively deploying these environments. This tutorial will survey the theoretical and practical issues driving the emergence of collaborative telelearning.