Project Report to the Atlantic Philanthropies

Education in the Digital Age: Leadership, Linkages, and Roadmaps

Application Number 9193

James J. Duderstadt, Director

The University of Michigan

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Executive Summary

This project, aimed at understanding and influencing the impact of information technology on the broader higher education enterprise, is now up and running. Important steps have already been taken to form key leadership groups among diverse types of colleges and universities, across academic and professional disciplines, and among higher education association leaders at the state and national level.

Key staff and student assistants have been recruited to design, develop, and implement the web-based knowledge environment to support both the dissemination of information and the support of collaborative activities. The necessary server hardware and software have been installed, and this summer we are focusing on the design and content of the website, with an early version scheduled for this fall.

Finally, the Atlantic Philanthropies grant has proved important in the completion of a document for the higher education community, *Higher Education in the Digital Age: Technology Issues and Strategies for American Colleges and Universities*. This first effort at a broad strategic roadmapping exercise is scheduled for publication by the American Council on Education in late fall and will be circulated to its membership. It is our intent to use this for the basis of further discussion, strategy, and policy development by the higher education community and its various stakeholders.

Narrative

The project is aimed at understanding and influencing the impact of information technology on higher education by: 1) establishing and guiding several key leadership groups aimed at identifying issues and developing action agendas (including national higher education associations, state alliances, cross-disciplinary groups, and foundations); 2) building knowledge resources to support these groups (e.g., web portals, collaboration spaces, workshop experiences, intellectual frameworks); and 3) using these leadership groups and knowledge resources to develop a series of strategic technology roadmaps for various constituencies of higher education (e.g., colleges and universities, national organizations, and stakeholders such as state and federal government).

Although the funding for the project has been in place only since the first of the year, we have already made substantial progress toward several of these objectives (as illustrated by the timeline diagram at the end of this report):

Leadership Linkage Groups

National Higher Education Associations: We have already had the opportunity to meet with the leadership of several key national higher education associations, including making presentations to the American Council on Education (and its Secretariat) and conducting (in collaboration with the Futures Project) a focus group of university presidents from the Association of American Universities. We intend to formalize these relationships with meetings of the association leadership this fall.

College-University Linkages: We have taken the first steps toward forming a linkage group of higher education leaders, working first with the existing partnership between the University of Michigan and Oberlin College and Kalamazoo College. In May we hosted a workshop at the UM Media Union of the key leaders of instructional technology from two dozen liberal arts colleges in Michigan (with the cooperation of the Council of Michigan Foundations). We intend to follow up this workshop with further discussions with college leadership. We have also begun discussions with the Michigan Virtual University. It is our intent to launch this fall a leadership group of leaders from the various elements of the higher education community in Michigan (and then later the Midwest), including research universities, regional universities, liberal arts colleges, community colleges, and for-profit and virtual universities.

State-Based Organizations: We have begun discussions concerning collaboration with CyberState, an organization of roughly 50 leaders from the public and private sector in Michigan concerned with strategy and policy concerning information technology. It is our intent to use this collaboration to leverage discussions with the higher education linkage group mentioned above on key policy issues.

Cross-Disciplinary Groups: We have begun the process of designing a cross-disciplinary research seminar for the 2002-2003 academic year drawing together faculty and students from a broad range of academic and professional disciplines. We intend to expand this effort by inviting the participation of faculty colleagues from other academic institutions.

Knowledge Environment

The development of knowledge resources is also well underway, with the hiring of staff and student assistants to design, develop, and implement the supporting web environments for both gathering, linking, and distributing resources concerning the impact of information technology on higher education and supporting the collaboration of the various leadership linkage groups involved in the project. The early design has been accomplished, the web server environment has been developed, and content development is proceeding this summer. It is our hope that the first phase of the knowledge environment will be up and running by early fall.

Roadmap Development

Although early in the project, we have already leveraged the Atlantic Philanthropies grant to support, in part, the completion of a document for the higher education community, *Higher Education in the Digital Age: Technology Issues and Strategies for American Colleges and Universities*. This first effort at a strategic roadmapping exercise is scheduled for publication by the American Council on Education in late fall and will be circulated to its membership. It is our intent to use this for the basis of further discussion, strategy, and policy development by the higher education community and its various stakeholders. The support of the Atlantic Philanthropies will be acknowledged in this effort, and copies will be made available when they appear this fall.

Summary

Despite the fact that the Atlantic Philanthropies project has been underway for only a few months, we are moving well ahead toward our objectives, with the first tangible results targeted for this fall. We are also coordinating closely with the National Academy of Sciences project concerning the Impact of Information Technology on the Future of the Research University, as well as with several other higher education projects (including the Futures Project at Brown University and the Alliance for Community Technology sponsored by the Kellogg Foundation).