School of Computer Science
Course 15-391

Spring 2006

Final Consulting Report

Union Project

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Union Project

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I. Executive Summary

Community Partner: Duane Hessler ext. 5
Student Consultant: Halloran Parry

The Union Project's mission is as follows: "Providing neighborhood space to community leaders, artists, and people of faith to connect, create and celebrate."

The Union Project is a community center located between East Liberty and Highland Park. It serves as a venue for classes, concerts, and meetings. It rents office space to other organizations and just completed construction of a coffee shop. Duane is the facilities manager at the Union Project. He is also the system administrator.

Scope of Work:

1. Tech Plan: Create a working document that includes all relevant information about the current technological environment. Specifically, document the current security settings for both networks and design and document a maintenance plan for the office server.

2. Staff Computing Skills: The consultant works with four staff members individually to build computing skills relevant to each employee's duties. This includes expanding the use of Excel and sending email attachments.

Outcomes:

1. Tech Plan: The Union Project now has a partial tech plan as well as documentation practice. They have the resources to create documentation for anything in the office, technical or otherwise. The tech plan must be completed and regularly updated.

2. Staff Computing Skills: Four staff members have gained new knowledge of computers and an increased ability to do his or her job formally and efficiently. They now know the experience of using computers and programs as tools to complete tasks such as budget planning and payroll organization. If they continue to use these skills, they will remember them and will gain more skills over time.

Recommendations:

1. Expand the tech plan. By adding sections to formalize technology policy, the tech plan will become even more useful to the Union Project as an organization-specific resource of knowledge. The addition of literature addressing budgeting procedures and record keeping, maintenance procedures, and future expansion plans will boost the tech plan from a static record into a dynamic Union Project technology handbook.

II. Context Analysis

Organization

The Union Project started in January of 2001 when its founders committed to acquiring and restoring the former Union Baptist Church. With several grants and many volunteers, the Union Project was able to transform the building into a usable, functional space. Restoration continues with the replacement of stained glass windows.

Facilities

The Union Project is located on the corner of Negley and Stanton. The building, constructed at the end of the nineteenth century, was originally a Baptist Church. The ground floor contains the organization's offices, a small meeting room, a conference room, a coffee shop, and a small auditorium. The second floor is entirely office space for other organizations that use the building. The basement houses the stained glass and ceramics studios, the kitchen and break room, the server room, and a large amount of unfinished storage space.

Programs

The Union Project currently offers classes in stained glass window restoration. The cost of the program covers materials, and participants are taught restorative techniques. They are then able to recondition the windows of the church.

Several ceramics classes are also offered, with minimal course fees. The goal is to eventually create a production ceramics studio in order to bring in extra revenue.

A mosaic mural class is available. This class provides a convenient outlet for the scrap generated by stained glass and ceramic production.

Yoga classes are offered on a weekly basis in January and February.

The Union Project serves as a nonprofit incubator for many area organizations. Tenants rent office space in the building and have access to the Union Project's Internet connection, as well as the use of some of the building facilities, such as conference rooms.

Staff

Executive Director: Jessica King

In addition to being the Executive Director, Jess is also Union Project's financial director. She handles most things financial and oversees the organization. Jess uses Excel to generate line item budget reports for each staff member. She wanted to find a way to enable each staff member to keep track of his or her own expenses.

Associate Director: Justin Rothshank

Justin is in charge of scheduling facilities reservations and the contact database. He keeps the event calendar and the list of contacts on his personal computer.

Program Coordinator: Hillary Brown

Hillary handles event planning, implementation, and publicity. She represents the de facto public relations department at the Union Project. She also handles one of their internship programs with a local high school. Hillary uses MS Publisher and Excel. Hilary was looking for a way to keep track of her expenses.

Facilities Manager: Duane Hessler

Duane is the Union Project's resident system administrator, and he has a good amount of knowledge of most things technical. He is also in charge of budgeting and has a large amount of sway on most decisions relating to technical purchasing and facilities renewal.

Office Manager: Kathy Miller

Kathy is in charge of "creating systemic organizational tools." She handles initial room reservation requests and answers most of the phone calls. She is usually the first person that a visitor will see upon entering the building. Kathy uses Word for document generation and to produce mass mailings. She felt that she would benefit from more general computer experience.

Custodian: Tim Poellnitz

Tim is the entire custodial staff at the Union Project. He had only just started using a computer at the beginning of the partnership. He needed to create his timesheets in Excel and send them as attachments in Thunderbird. He also wanted to acquire more general computer knowledge and gain experience in surfing the Internet.

Ceramics Artist: Garret Smith

Technical Environment

Although technology plays a major role at the Union Project, it is not their top priority. With the exception of Duane and Justin, the staff uses office computers: Dell Optiplex desktops. Most of the staff possessed basic computer skills and were able to accomplish all job related tasks, but they were not confident in their ability to do their jobs as effectively as possible.

In the interests of saving money and malware avoidance, the office uses Mozilla Firefox for their web browsing needs and Mozilla Thunderbird for email. The office experimented with using StarOffice for document generation before switching to Microsoft Office due to program incompatibility.

The office is currently testing Ebase database software, and they use QuickBooks to keep track of financial records.

The server has a 3 disk RAID 5 array with a total capacity of 140 GB. RAID 5 will accommodate the loss of one hard disk without loss of data. In addition, the server images itself onto a tape drive nightly.

Technical Management

Duane is the sole employee in charge of planning and maintaining the Union Project's technical gear. He makes all technology purchasing decisions and is the system administrator for the network and the machines on it.

Most of the office network maintains itself with relatively little fuss. All software automatically updates itself and the system is automatically backed up nightly.

Other staff members see Duane as a convenient computer knowledge source, and they tended to seek him out when they have any sort of computer question. Most commonly, these questions related to program use and day-to-day computer skills. Often, the answers to these questions could easily be found in help menus or through a quick web search. Duane's stated job responsibilities are many, and they all take a fair amount of time to complete. The more time he spent helping his co-workers with their computers, the less time he had to complete his job responsibilities, which include tech planning, purchasing, and, until recently, building the new coffee shop.

Technology Planning

Duane is in charge of the tech planning that goes on at the Union Project. He collaborated with a nonprofit consulting company to spec and install the new network infrastructure in the building.

Documentation for the tech equipment at the Union Project was sparse. Duane had a few manufacturer spec sheets for the networking hardware, as well as a final invoice for the new equipment he had purchased, but there was not much beyond that. In particular, there was no documentation created for and by the Union Project. There was also no record of how the equipment was set up and configured to suit the Union Project's needs.

Internal and External Communication

The staff uses AOL Instant Messenger to communicate with each other while they are at work. They all have their own unionproject.org email addresses, and they use email to transfer documents among staff members. This method of transferring documents was ineffective, as Kathy could not open the attachments she was receiving due to a problem with her mail client. She now uses Mozilla Thunderbird to handle her email, and this seems to have solved the problem. There are two bulletin boards within the building that host event announcements and internal notices.

Externally, their primary method of communicating with volunteers is through a weekly newsletter that Justin oversees. The contents of this newsletter are mirrored on their website (*www.unionproject.org*).

Information Management

Currently, the contacts database is stored exclusively on Justin's personal computer. It is not accessible by anyone else. Within the next few months, this situation will change. Ebase, a database software created for nonprofits, will be installed on a server to which

all employees will have access. At that point, anyone will be able to enter data at any time, from any computer on the Union Project network.

The event calendar also resides solely on Justin's computer, and it is not accessible publicly. There is no centralized event listing that the staff has access to, and this means that Kathy is often unable to answer questions from callers wondering about upcoming events.

III. Consulting Tasks

Task 1. Tech Plan

Duane and the student consultant worked to create a tech plan for the Union Project. The main goal was to record the current technological environment at the Union Project and to construct a framework that will accommodate future revisions.

From TechSoup: "A technology plan is the single most important ingredient to effectively using technology in your organization. The technology planning process will help minimize technology-related crises, use staff time efficiently, and avoid wasting money on equipment. Create a plan to help you think through your priorities in order to use technology in a way that directly furthers your mission."[i]

The process of creating a tech plan is as important as the tech plan itself. Creating a tech plan forces the authors to clearly define the role they want technology to play in their organization and how they want to fill that role. Creating a tech plan involves identifying problems in the organization, researching solutions to those problems, budgeting for solutions, and planning for maintenance and future purchases. The tech plan is a repository for the results of these efforts. It provides a clear vision of how technology can directly further the mission of an organization and a plan for how the organization will obtain that vision.

In the case of the Union Project, the interoffice network and computers gave staff members the ability to create publication materials, keep financial records, and perform administrative duties necessary to their positions. The coffee shop network added to the attraction of a café space, encouraging customers to stay longer, thus strengthening the Union Project's role as a community center.

Task 2. Expanding Staff Skills

Jess, Kathy, Hilary, and Tim all expressed an enthusiastic desire to learn more about their computers and the programs on them. They wanted to be able to perform certain job related tasks more efficiently and they recognized that their computers afforded them the ability to do just that. They each chose their own areas of skill building that related directly to the work they were doing at the time.

IV. Outcomes Analysis and Recommendations

Task 1. Tech Plan

The Union Project has a fledgling tech plan that is designed to expand as the organization grows. It addresses the current on-site technology and includes a maintenance plan as well as a failure contingency system.

The tech plan is broken down into the following sections: Routine Maintenance, Upgrades, Evaluation, People Responsible, On-Site Contingency, and Current Equipment.

The Routine Maintenance, Upgrades, and On-Site Contingency sections all address the prevention and mitigation of equipment failure. The Routine Maintenance section details a defragmentation plan. It also calls for the automation of software updates and virus definitions. The Upgrades section lays out the criteria for determining when hardware should be upgraded. It does not include specific recommendations for the make or model of the upgrade. Such specifications would quickly become outdated due to the current technology development rate and the resulting frequent price changes and equipment availability. On-Site Contingency calls for the Union Project to keep one spare hard drive on site in case any hard drive in the building fails. It also lists the Union Project's current acceptable network down time of three days.

The Current Equipment section includes a list of new hardware that was installed during the system upgrade in February. It does not yet include serial numbers of any equipment or the specifications of the staff computers.

Before the consultant arrived, there was no written tech plan. UP had budgeted for and partially implemented a full system upgrade. Neither the old system nor the upgrade had been documented. There was also no standby equipment to replace failed gear. This meant that if any computer broke, there would be minimum half-day delay while a replacement part was procured and installed. The interoffice network tasks were partially automated: software updates were done automatically and the server was automatically imaged and backed up to tape every night. However, there were no automatic system maintenance routines in place. As a result, maintenance tasks such as defragmentation did not get done on a regular basis.

The tech plan remains unfinished, hinging on the addition of documentation of some of the Union Project's tech policies and specific information regarding their current equipment. For the tech plan to be considered complete, it needs to include documentation of the network acceptable use policies, the firewall settings used to enforce those policies, and the serial numbers and specifications of all the equipment currently on site.

In order for the tech plan to be sustained, all tasks must be automated on the server. Reserve hardware must be purchased in anticipation of failure. And UP staff, mainly

Duane, Justin and Jess, must take the time to re-evaluate the tech plan and update it as needed, probably every 6 to 12 months.

The single biggest risk is that the tech plan will not be updated. If the tech plan is not updated, it will quickly become obsolete and it is unlikely that the Union Project will attain the technological growth that they are expecting.

Due to the Union Project's ambitious goals during this time - including a complete system overhaul and the opening of a café - the consultant, with Duane's input, drafted the initial tech plan. As a result of this process, the tech plan can serve as an example of how Duane's knowledge of the Union Project's systems can be translated into a concrete, usable document.

By maintaining a tech plan, Duane is increasing the sustainability of the Union Project's technological infrastructure. He is also setting an example for other staff members to document their work, further increasing the sustainability of the organization overall. Additionally, new staff members will now be able to research the current state of the Union Project's technology environment just by consulting the tech plan.

Task 2. Expanding Computer Skills

Each staff member asked the consultant to address a task specific to the staff member's duties. The consultant obliged as follows:

Jess has the ability to perform many operations in Microsoft Excel, such as referencing specific cells and groups of cells and creating and modifying formulas within cells. Jess will be able to apply the techniques she learned to other Excel tasks.

Hilary constructed an Excel budget-planning sheet. She can plan her purchasing for the year and then update her expenditures as she makes purchases. Her budget sheet automatically updates her total expenditures and her total available monetary resources. Before, Hilary used an ad hoc method of pencils and paper to do her budget planning. These papers and calculations were easily lost, forcing her to recalculate everything.

Hilary acquired a skill set similar to Jess', and now each of them can act as a knowledge resource for the other when working in Excel. In addition, Hilary is in a position to help the rest of the staff complete tasks in Excel. She has the knowledge to train her officemates, which increases the sustainability of her training.

Kathy can now use Google and Microsoft Help to find answers to her computer questions. Her ability to perform unfamiliar computer tasks such as installing fonts and changing email preferences is not dependent on Duane's availability to answer questions, as it was in the previous situation. Instead, she uses help programs and search engines to find answers to her questions. During one of the training sessions,

Kathy used Microsoft Word's built in help database to find instructions to install a font. She followed the on-screen directions and was able to successfully install the font she needed. Because she is using proprietary help databases, the answers she finds will likely be more accurate and more appropriate than those she would get from colleagues.

Tim is able to fill out timesheets in Excel and send them as attachments via email. He can now respond to email and perform Google searches. During one training session, he used Google to find the KDKA website. He also practiced typing the URL directly into the navigation bar. In this way, he was able to learn the difference between a site address and a search term. He has already completed one timesheet this way and he successfully sent it to Jess as an email attachment in Thunderbird. Before this year, Tim had never used a computer. He was instead filling out printed timesheets by hand and physically carrying them to Jess' office, where she would manually re-enter the timesheet back into Excel. This process wasted time and, due to multiple data entry processes, created more room for error and data loss.

For each of these staff members, computers are tools necessary to complete their jobs. However, none of their jobs are centered on computer use. The most effective tools are those that can be used to efficiently complete their intended tasks and then put away. By walking each staff member through new ways of completing tasks necessary to their jobs, the consultant is enabling the staff members to use their tools more effectively and more efficiently. Time sheets are now completely standardized, enabling a uniform policy of filling them out and submitting them. Budgets will be more accurate and completed in less time now that they are being laid out in Excel, as opposed to being written down on paper. And more importantly, the staff members themselves are creating these budget sheets and they will be able to tailor those sheets to suit their needs. This creates a greater sense of comfort around computers within the employees and encourages them to expand their computer use to complete more tasks more quickly using their computers.

Recommendation 1. Additions to the Tech Plan

The consultant and the community partner developed a partial tech plan for the Union Project. As of this writing, it is mostly comprised of a maintenance plan for the existing internal network set up. The consultant recommends that as UP grows and as its technology scope gets more ambitious, the tech plan be updated to reflect these changes. Any plans to change the current technology environment should be recorded in the tech plan.

A well-written tech plan is a hallmark of a polished, professional organization. It signifies a commitment to planning, implementing, and sustaining a well-run technology environment. A tech plan is an excellent at-a-glance overview of the current technical state of the organization. It is a great resource for new hires and it can be easily adapted for funding proposals and publications.

Additionally, the consultant recommends the following tech plan additions.

EQUIPMENT INFORMATION

The tech plan should include specifications and serial numbers for all of the computing and networking equipment that the Union Project owns and/or uses. This inclusion into the tech plan will allow future readers to quickly gain an understanding of the Union Project's technological resources. An additional benefit of this tech plan addition is that it will create a central repository for the most important equipment information. In the event that replacement parts need to be ordered, warranties need to be used, or insurance claims need to be filed, all of the necessary and relevant information will already be compiled in one place.

EXCEL EXPENDITURE TRACKING SHEETS

The consultant recommends that the Union Project create or adopt Excel spreadsheet templates that will allow staff member to enter their purchases as they happen. These purchase lines should include the purchase date, a brief description of the purchase made, the unit amount, the quantity purchased, and the total amount spent per purchase. These sheets should also keep track of the total amount spent and the total amount left in the line item. Both of these fields can and should be done with summation formulas so that they will update themselves automatically.

Hilary, Jess, Duane, and Kathy each have their own corporate credit cards that are tied directly to budget line items. At the present time, there is no formal way for each staff member to keep track of credit card expenditures during the month. Jess gets all of the credit card statements at the end of each month and she compiles an updated expenditure sheet for each staff member. However, staff members have expressed a desire to have a way to keep track of their purchases on their own. By doing this, they will not have to rely on Jess' monthly reports, and they will be able to plan their future purchases more effectively since they will always know exactly how much money they have left. Hilary has created a rudimentary template to serve this purpose. With a minimal amount of effort, all of the staff could use this template.

COFFEE SHOP WIRELESS NETWORK ACCEPTABLE USE POLICY AND ENFORCEMENT

The consultant recommends that UP record the acceptable use policy for this network in the tech plan. The consultant further advises that the firewall settings used to enforce this policy be added to the tech plan as well.

To enforce the ideals and goals of the UP as a community center, the coffee shop wireless network is firewalled. The firewall implements content filtering and blocks out adult and malicious web materials. It also prevents users from downloading files over the network.

OFFICE NETWORK ACCEPTABLE USE POLICY AND ENFORCEMENT

As with the coffee shop, the private office network acceptable use policy, and any measures taken to enforce it, should be recorded in the tech plan.

The UP private office network that the staff uses is firewalled to filter out malicious content. However, as of this writing, there is no written acceptable use policy and enforcement protocol.

For reference:

- TechSoup has an excellent series of articles dealing with the creation and maintenance of a tech plan. The index on the website is in reverse chronological order – start at the bottom and work up. This literature takes the reader step by step through the process of drafting a tech plan. http://www.techsoup.org/howto/articles/techplan/index.cfm

About the Consultant

Halloran Parry is a senior double major in fine arts and computer science. She will spend the upcoming summer in Sri Lanka performing technology consulting services for nonprofit organizations on the South coast. After she graduates, she intends to pursue a career in project management in the technology sector.

[i] "Technology Planning." TechSoup. 26 Apr. 2006 <http://www.techsoup.org/howto/articles/techplan/index.cfm>.

Past Community Partners

4 Kids Early Learning Centers
Addison Behavioral Care, Inc.
Alafia Cultural Services
Alcoa Collaborative
Allegheny Co. Housing Authority
Allegheny General Hospital Pastoral Staff
American Association of University Women
Animal Friends, Inc.
ASSET, Inc.
ASTEP-Grace Memorial Presbyterian Church
Auberle
Auberle In-Home Services
Bedford Hope Center – Resident Council
Bedford Initiatives
Bethany House Ministry
Bishop Boyle Center
Bloomfield-Garfield Corporation
Borough of Crafton
Boys & Girls of Wilkinsburg
Braddock Carnegie Library & Community Center
Brashear Association, Inc.
Breachmenders
BTC Center
CADA-Citizens to Abolish Domestic Apartheid
Career and Workforce Development Center East
Carnegie LIbrary of Homestead
Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh
Carnegie Science Center – Hill House Association
CART-Consumer Action Response Team
Center Avenue YMCA
Center Avenue YMCA, Allequippa Terrace
Center for Creative Play
Center for Hearing and Deaf Services, Inc.
Center of Life
Central Academy
Central New Development Corporation
Children Youth Ministry
Children's Museum
Christian Life Skills
Community Day
Community Day School
Community Human Services Corporation
Community Technical Assistance Center
Competitive Employment Opportunities
Conflict Resolution Center International
CONTACT Pittsburgh
CTAC-Community Technical Assistance Center
East End Cooperative Ministries
East End Neighborhood Employment Center
East End Neighborhood Forum
East Liberty Development
East Liberty Presbyterian Church
East Side Community Collaborative
Eastminster Child Care Center
Eastside Neighborhood Employment Center
Education Center
Every Child, Inc.
Fair Housing Partnership
Faison Development & Opportunities Center
FAME
Family Services of Western PA
First Charities/First United Methodist Church
Friendship Development Association
Garfield Jubilee Association, Inc.
Gateway to the Arts
Glen Hazel Family Reading Center
Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank
Greater Pittsburgh Literacy Council
Greenfield Senior Center
Gwen's Girls
Hazelwood Senior Center
Hazelwood YMCA
Hill House Association
Hill House Association – After School Program
Hill/Oakland Workforce Collaborative
Hope Academy of Music and the Arts
Hosanna House
Housing Alliance of Pennsylvania
Hunger Services Network
Jane Holmes Residence
Jewish Family & Children's Service
Jewish Residential Services
Joy-Full-Gospel Fellowship After School Program
Just Harvest
Kingsley Association
Lawrenceville Development Corporation
League of Young Voters
Light of Life Family Assistance Program
Madison Elementary School
Manchester Academic Charter School
McKees Rocks Terrace
McKeesport Collaborative
McKelvy Elementary School
Methodist Union of Social Agencies
Miller Elementary School, Principal's Office
Mon Valley Initiative
Mon Valley Providers Council
Mon Valley Resources Unlimited
Mon Valley Unemployment Committee
Mon Yough Community Services
Mount Ararat Community Activities Center
NAACP National Voter Fund
NAMI Southwestern Pennsylvania
National Association of Minority Contractors / Black Contractors Association
Negro Educational Emergency Drive
New Beginnings Learning Center
New Penley Place
Northside Coalition for Fair Housing
Northside Institutional Children Youth Ministry
Northside Leadership Conference
Northview Heights Family Support Center
OASIS Senior Center
Opera Theater of Pittsburgh
Operation Better Block
Orr Compassionate Care Center
Outreach Teen & Family Services
Parental Stress Center
Pennsylvania Biodiversity Partnership

(This list is continued on the next page…)

Past Community Partners (continued)

Pennsylvania Low Income Housing Coalition
People's Oakland
Pittsburgh Action Against Rape
Pittsburgh Citizens' Police Review Board
Pittsburgh Health Corps
Pittsburgh Mediation Center
Pittsburgh Social Venture Partners
Pittsburgh Vision Services
Pittsburgh Voyager
POISE Foundation
Program for Health Care to Underserved Populations
Providence Family Support Center
Radio Information Service
Reading Is Fundamental Pittsburgh
Regional Coalition of Community Builders
River Valley School
Rodef Shalom
Rodman Street Missionary Baptist Church
Ronald McDonald House Charities of Pittsburgh
Rosedale Block Cluster
Rx Council of Western PA
Sacred Heart Elementary School
Salvation Army Family Crisis Center
Schenley Heights Community Development Center
Second East Hills Social Services Center
Sharry Everett Scholarship Fund
Southwest Pennsylvania Area Health
St. James School
St. Stephen Elementary School
Sustainable Pittsburgh
The Community House
The HUB Downtown Street Outreach Center
Thomas Merton Center
Three Rivers Center for Independent Living
Three Rivers Youth
TLC-USA
Turtle Creek Valley Council of Governments
Tzu Chi Wen Chinese School
Union Project
United Cerebral Palsy
Urban League of Pittsburgh
Urban Youth Action
Ursuline Services
Vintage Senior Center
Weed & Seed Program, Mayor's Office
Wesley Center
West Pittsburgh Partnership
Wireless Neighborhoods
Women's Enterprise Center
Working Order
YMCA McKeesport
YMCA Senior AIDE Center
Youth Fair Chance
YouthBuild
YWCA Bridge Housing
YWCA of McKeesport

Community Partner Information FAQ

(continued from back cover)

7. What does it cost to be a Community Partner?

The cost for participating in this experience is your time and your commitment to follow through as agreed. As leaders of community organizations, we know your time is of premium value. Those who have made this investment of time have reaped returns many times over.

8. What does the Community Partner have to offer Carnegie Mellon students?

- Students learn to structure unstructured problems. Community organizations are complex environments with complex problems. Your organization provides excellent environments in which to practice the art of structuring problems.
- Students come from different cultural backgrounds and most have never been in a nonprofit organization. They are practicing how to communicate across cultural differences and across technical knowledge differences. They need to be able to make mistakes and learn from them. Community partners provide a supportive relationship in which students can take risks and learn about how to communicate, how to relate, and how to maintain professionalism.
- Students get the opportunity to practice process consulting. They are learning that expertise is only as valuable as the ability to help others solve authentic problems. You provide a context in which students can practice these skills.
- We've found that Community Partners are very appreciative for the students' assistance. There is nothing more rewarding than to experience your efforts as valuable and rewarding for others. You provide that experience for students.
- Finally, you offer a glimpse into career opportunities in the nonprofit arena. Students learn to appreciate those who work in the nonprofit sector, and they grow to appreciate the role and function of community organizations. We hope this appreciation not only informs the choices they make in life, but also encourages them to care and give back to the community throughout their professional careers.

9. How do I become a Community Partner

Contact an instructor, Joe Mertz or Scott McElfresh. Send your contact information: name, title, name of organization, address, phone, fax, location of organization and your interest in being a Community Partner. You will have a telephone conversation and possibly an on-site visit. All organizations are considered, though preference is given to organizations providing services to a low-income community or a community at risk for falling into the "digital divide."

Send email to
instructors@tcinc.org
(email preferred)

Or call
Joe Mertz: 412.268.2540
Scott McElfresh: 412.268.4859

10. Caveats

- We do our best to ensure that students who sign-up for the class are committed to completing the class, however, occasionally, a student ends up withdrawing from the class during the semester. Typically, this happens when a student has under estimated the time they need for this class. We do our best to advise students so this does not happen. When it does happen, there is nothing we can do except to invite the Community Partner to participate in the following semester.
- The semester is short and the student has to do a lot of work in a short amount of time. For this reason, it is critical that you keep your scheduled appointments, do the work you agree to do, and maintain communication with the student. The student will need your feedback on reports quickly, often the next day. When we get to the final consulting reports, we will need fast turnaround time from Community Partners because we also need to get the reports published in time for the Community Technology Forum.
- If there is any chance that you think you will not be able to follow through with the requirements of this partnership, please wait until such time as when you are able to do it. Since the Community Partner is the focus for the student's learning, it is essential that the partnership be sustained for the semester.

Community Partner Information FAQ

1. What is the goal of the partnership in this course?

The goal of this class is to expand the capacity of the Community Partner to use, plan for, and manage technology, administratively and programmatically. The student is learning process consulting, project management, communication, relationship management, problem identification, and analysis.

2. As a Community Partner, what can I expect to happen?

Once you match with a student consultant, you will set a meeting schedule that you and the student will keep for the remainder of the semester. The student comes to your location for 3 hours a week. During this time you and the student work together. This is not an internship in which the student merely works on site. Rather, it is a consulting partnership in which you must work together to achieve your technology goals. The student facilitates a process that moves from assessment, to analysis of problems and opportunities, to defining a scope of work, to developing a work plan, to analyzing outcomes and finally presenting that analysis. As the Community Partner, you are the consulting client. You provide information and discuss that information with the student. But you are more than a client; you are also a learner. In process consulting the client "owns the problem" as well as its solution. The consultant facilitates the client in achieving that solution. The consultant doesn't "do for" the client. Rather, the consultant works with the client.

3. What types of activities are typically included in a scope of work?

Each scope of work is unique and depends solely upon the specific needs and opportunities of the individual Community Partner. Partnerships have focused on a wide range of activities, including: personal information management (how to use Windows, organize files, backup files, use various software packages, use time managers, use Palm Pilots and other personal information management tools, e-mail, etc.), developing a plan for how to train staff and how to incorporate knowledge and skill into job description, designing a local area network, implementing Internet connectivity, designing and developing a web site, determining effective data storage methods, analyzing the needs for an information database, designing and implementing a database, solving technical problems, designing a public community technology access center, determining the specifications for computers, developing disaster recovery plans, and more.

4. Who can be a Community Partner?

This course target individuals playing an administrative or programmatic leadership role within a community organization. Typically Community Partners are Executive Directors, Directors, Assistant/Associate Directors, Coordinators, and Managers. But, we make the selection based on the organization and the role that the individual plays within that organization, regardless of title.

5. Why do you focus on organizational leaders?

For an organization to use information technology effectively, its leaders must have a vision for how it can support the organization's mission, they must be comfortable enough to integrate technology into their personal work practices, and they must know enough to budget, staff, and subcontract appropriately. By partnering one-on-one with a student consultant, the leader has a unique opportunity to build that vision, comfort, and knowledge, no matter where they are starting from.

6. What are the requirements for being a Community Partner?

- Hold a leadership role within your organization.
- Have a computer in your office or one you could or do use in your job.
- Reliably meet with the student consultant 3 hours per week, every week, for about the 13 weeks.
- Come to an on-campus gathering 2 times during the semester. Once at the beginning and once at the end.
- Share information about your organization with the student consultant.
- Read project reports prepared by the student and give the student immediate feedback.
- Complete a brief response form after reading each report and return to the instructor.
- Keep a log of consulting sessions and send to instructors twice during the semester.
- Read the final consulting report. Give feedback to the student immediately.
- Make a brief presentation at the end of the semester (with the student) at the Community Technology Forum. (This is the 2nd on-campus gathering you are required to attend.)

(continued inside back cover)