

# Faculty Showcase '08



Sponsored by Academic Technology at Simmons College



## Blended Learning at Simmons College

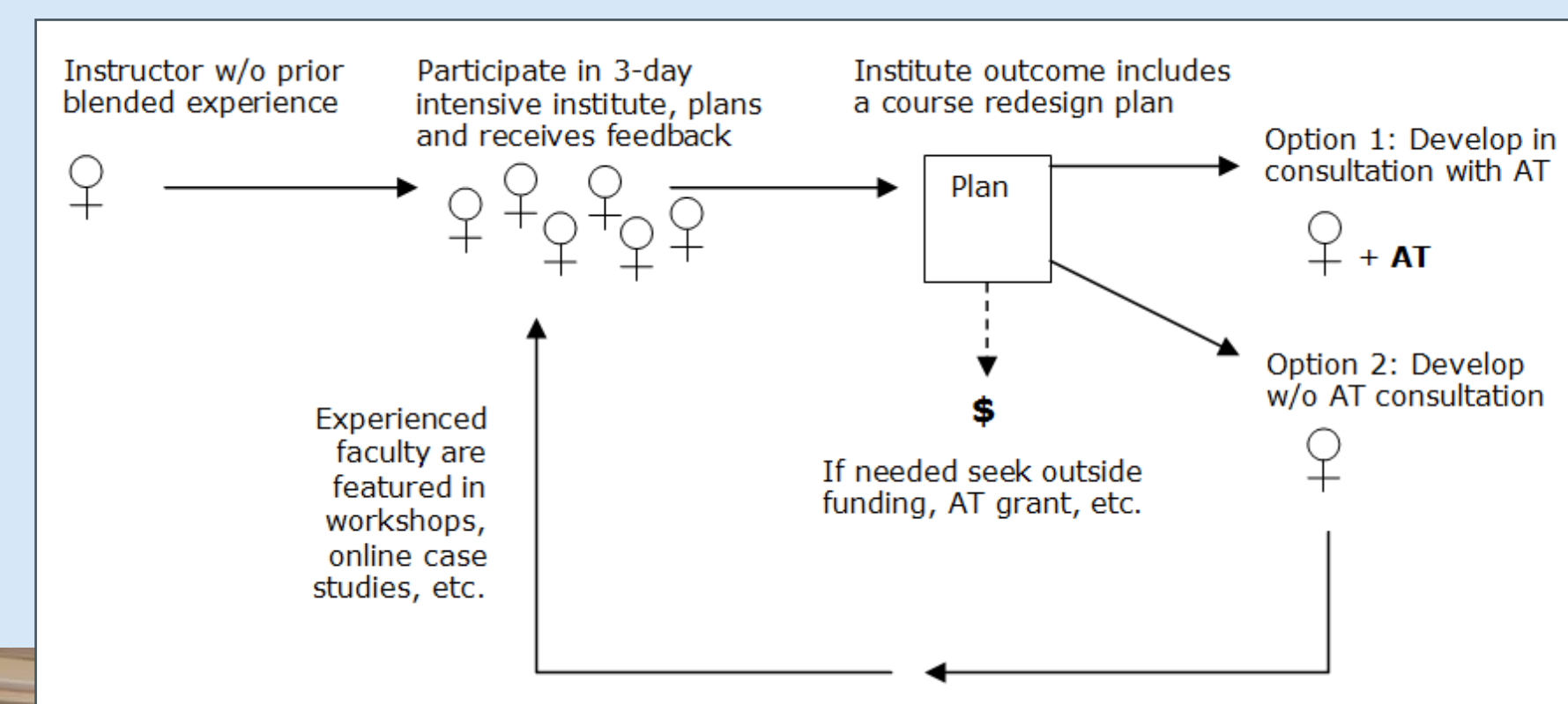
### Goals

- Act on priorities identified by faculty, students, and staff through the Shared Academic Technology Vision (SATV) process.
- Increase the range of options for teaching and learning at Simmons College.
- Empower our community to create powerful teaching and learning experiences.
- Implement blended learning in a way that increases the sense of presence (not distance) among students and faculty.

### Project Overview

In the fall of 2006, representatives from across Simmons College convened to develop a shared language and direction for using technology for teaching and learning. This Shared Academic Technology Vision (SATV) was debated and voted on by faculty, staff, students and alumni representing every school, as well as by Technology, the Library, and Academic Support Center, over the course of three half-day sessions and in school-specific planning groups. At every juncture of the SATV process, blended learning was voted on as a top priority.

Once blended learning was identified as a priority for Simmons, Academic Technology (AT) set out



to collaborate with faculty, staff, and administration to shape policies and build systems of support. Steps included: 1) the formation of a Blended Learning Working Group, 2) the creation of an action plan for all stakeholders including Technology and Faculty Governance, 3) the development

of a Faculty Institute on Blended Learning, and 4) the solicitation of outside funding from the Sloan Foundation.

Deans approved a document titled *Supporting Blended Learning at Simmons: An Action Plan*, which outlines important new college-wide policies. For example, aspects of the plan include:

- During the initial phase of the blended learning initiative (3-5 years), faculty will receive an additional \$3,000 for developing a blended course and an additional \$2,000 (above base pay) the first time that they teach a newly revised or developed blended course.
- Establishment of an optimal 1:17-20 facilitator/student ratio, including Assistant Instructors and preceptors.
- Excellence in blended teaching will be recognized in promotion and tenure deliberation.
- Blended course redesign and development will be considered as a legitimate project to work on during sabbatical leave.
- Moving forward, schools agree to periodically update their benchmark research and ensure market-competitive rates for faculty compensation on blended course development, redesign, and teaching.
- Peer mentoring will be recognized as a service in promotion and tenure deliberation.

### Blended Learning Working Group

The working group took a blended approach to action plan development, meeting three times face-to-face while also working online in spring 2007. The resulting action plan included a set of recommendations, action steps, timelines, and a list of stakeholders responsible for implementing each step, approved by the College deans.

### Faculty Institute for Blended Learning

To prepare faculty to teach in the blended format, AT now hosts two Blended Learning Institutes each year. Participants are guided through a process of outcomes-oriented course planning and development that focuses on goals for student learning.

### Sloan Foundation Blended Learning Initiative

After months of hard work from committed individuals across the academic schools and AT, Simmons was awarded \$225,000 from the prestigious Sloan Foundation in December 2007. Simmons is the first private institution to receive this award. Funds will be used to create blended programs for Nursing and GSLIS (Mt. Holyoke campus).



In this year's Faculty Showcase, we are pleased to feature three examples of blended courses by Vipin Gupta, Sylvia Maxfield, and Madalaine Pugliese that grew out of the 2007 Blended Learning Institute.