Computing and Informational Services
Office of the Chief Information Officer

Briefing Document: CUNY on iTunes U December 10, 2008

iTunes U — Background

What is iTunes U?

From its inception, iTunes University—or iTunes U, as it is called—was a distinct part of Apple Computer's popular iTunes Music Store, where music and video could be downloaded to iPod devices for listening and viewing on-the-go.

Early participants in the iTunes U program—including Stanford, Duke, MIT, Berkeley and Penn State—took advantage of the ways in which iTunes U allowed controlled access to course-specific content through campus Learning Management Systems. Other, public content, including faculty lectures on popular subjects were made freely available to campus communities, opinion makers, alumni, prospective students and the public at large throughout the United States and internationally.

More recently, Apple expanded the iTunes U program to include cultural institutions that promote education, literature, and the performing arts, to name a few. Among such institutions that one can now find on iTunes U are the Asia Society, the New York Public Library, MoMA, Link TV (cross-cultural programming), various Public Broadcasting stations, and OYEZ (Supreme Court oral arguments)—all of which provide freely available content to the general public.

At the direction of CUNY's Chief Information Officer Brian Cohen, the university completed negotiations with Apple Computer to participate in the iTunes U program in July 2007. The agreement gives the university and its constituent colleges a facility for integrating rich media into the academic curricula as well as for exploiting a significant channel that allows the university to communicate with existing and new constituencies locally, nationally and internationally.

From a teaching and learning perspective, iTunes U—while not a facility for creating or editing audio and video content—provides CUNY faculty, course designers, instructional computing staff and students to store and link instructional content to Blackboard courses. Further, the iTunes desktop application integrates with iTunes U so that faculty and students can view and listen to instructional materials on iPods and other compatible players while on the go.

CUNY on iTunes U — Project Background

Planning for CUNY on iTunes U

Under the university's agreement with Apple, CUNY the right to establish a number of iTunes U sites, one for the university plus 23 for its constituent colleges, professional schools and degree-granting programs.

In fact, each CUNY entity is given two iTunes U sites: one that is course-centric and accessible only by CUNY faculty and students; the other, a site that can be accessed by the public at large. Never before had Apple granted two such sites to an iTunes U institution.

CUNY's agreement with Apple was the first to cover all the entities of a large multi-institutional university that sought to take an all-encompassing, collaborative approach to create a content-rich enterprise repository of digital media using the iTunes U platform.

The agreement:

- covers the University and 23 constituent colleges;

- grants to each CUNY entity 500 gigabytes of storage on iTunes U, totaling 12 terabytes of storage. (To put this in perspective, the University's total allocated storage space will hold approximately 350,000 audio or 50,000 video thirty-minute clips. [*]); and

- grants to the University the use of Apple storage and 48 (24 academic and 24 public) iTunes U sites at no cost to the University or the colleges.

In September, 2007 the Project Management Office of the university's Computing and Information Services organization under the direction of Claudia Colbert was engaged and assigned a project manager to begin planning a project that would encompass two distinct tracks: 1) an academic track to focus on the application of rich media to teaching and learning, and 2) a public and community affairs track that sought to present the messages of the university to various publics and constituencies on an beyond our urban campuses.

Dr, George Otte, in his capacity as CUNY's Director of Instructional Technology, joined the project to provide program leadership and subject matter expertise. At the request of the then Executive Vice Chancellor and University Provost Selma Botman, Michelle Fraboni, Faculty Fellow for Academic Technology, from Queens College joined the project to provide program design and subject matter expertise.

A decision was made to launch an academic pilot project that stressed four components:

- <u>Pedagogical Best Practices</u>: Encourage the development of best practices and demonstrate how these can be shared and incorporated into well designed, outcome-focused rich media content and associated learning activities.

- <u>Collaboration</u>: Foster an environment of supportive and results-producing collaboration where information technologists and instructional experts support faculty and student providers and consumers of rich media content.

- <u>Technology</u>: Promote the use of technologies and practical processes for producing or adapting quality and appealing audio and video content to a teaching and learning objective.

- <u>Creative, Usable Enhancements</u>: Demonstrate the ability to incorporate faculty- and student-driven enhancements into a learning process influenced by the creative use of audio and video content.

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[*] The actual number of clips depends on the mix of video and audio clips (video requiring more storage than audio) and various technical characteristics of the clips. On a per-college basis, the estimates above equate to approximately 15,000 audio and 2,000 video thirty-minute clips.

The Office of Academic Affairs agreed to sponsor the teaching and learning track. In December, 2007 EVC Botman wrote to the college provosts:

Dear Provosts, I am delighted to announce a new CUNY-wide academic initiative, a pilot project that focuses on using new media audio and video content to enhance teaching and learning for the benefit of our students. Attached, you will find an application to participate in this new initiative that explains it in more detail.

In sponsoring this effort, the Office of Academic Affairs recognizes that on many of our campuses, in many academic areas and among various faculties an intellectual ferment around the use of audio and video for academic purposes already exists.

We would like to tap into these campus efforts to demonstrate and articulate pedagogical best practices, identify effective methods and processes as well as a useful set of technologies that support faculty in their efforts to integrate rich media learning materials into the curricula.

Key to the success of this pilot project will be the collaboration of faculty, the expertise of the college Centers of Teaching & Learning, Librarians, and Academic/Instructional Technologists.

I urge you all to review the attached, return it as indicated by January 23, 2008, and participate in this important endeavor. Thank you. Selma

CUNY iTunes U – the Academic Pilot

The pilot project was launched on March 11. Specific milestones defining deliverables were published, that were to culminate in a series of presentations held shortly after the end of the semester in early June.

Seventeen 17 campuses participated in the pilot project by putting together campus teams consisting of faculty from various disciplines and from Centers of Excellence in Teaching and Learning supported by staff from IT and Instructional Technology organizations on campus. Campus teams collaborated in defining how they would use rich media in the initial pilot phase and how—in subsequent phases of the project—longer-range elements would be deployed them more widely and completely.

The participating campuses are:

1. Baruch College
2. Borough of Manhattan Community College
3. Bronx Community College
4. Brooklyn College
5. City College
6. College of Staten Island
7. CUNY Online Baccalaureate
8. Hostos Community College
9. John Jay College of Criminal Justice
10. Kingsborough Community College
11. Lehman College
12. Macaulay Honors College
13. Medgar Evers College
14. New York City College of Technology
15. Queens College
16. Queensborough Community College
17. York College

Additional campuses will be supported as they are able to commit resources to participate in the project.

Pilot Results to Date

Results to date are preliminary and not exhaustive of the potential, since constraints on time and resources did not allow all campuses to complete or present their projects. Nevertheless, there were some remarkable positive results and best practices as well as lessons learned:

- Student participation in the creation of audio and video can be used to establish and solidify a sense of academic community (Macaulay Honors College)
- Creating rich media that breaks all rules of thumb and best practices can offer an amusing and impactful presentation of what to avoid in creating instructional media (City College).
- Integrating course objectives, meaningful assignments and related follow-on activities with assessment mechanisms can result in stunningly creative, insightful student-created audio interviews of high production and educational value (College of Staten Island).
- Tools such as wikis, webinars, video-on-demand and discussion forums can break down inter- and intra-campus silos and foster collaboration and knowledge sharing among faculty and academic technologists.

Next Steps

CIS resources will continue to be devoted to this project to assist the colleges in completing, refining and expanding on their rich media initiatives. This includes such specific activities known at this time as:

- Enlisting and planning for a Teaching & Learning with Rich Media session at the 2008 CUNY IT Conference set for December. Thus far, faculty from the CUNY Online Baccalaureate program and from the College of Staten Island have agreed to participate.

- Working with Vanderbilt University to ensure that the Blackboard building block to integrate Blackboard and iTunes U courses is upgraded and enhanced to work with Blackboard version 8 (Domains). [†]

- Welcome additional CUNY college participation in the project; among the likely additions will be Hunter, LaGuardia and the Graduate School of Journalism.

- Continue to work toward a comprehensive body of pedagogical knowledge and best practices that inform faculty and lead to more effective rich-media learning materials and desired outcomes.

- Support additional academic or instructional technology rich-media initiatives that flow from the work of various academic bodies, such as the Committee on Academic Technologies (CAT).

CIS will continue to manage this effort and make the collaborative tools (the project wiki and discussion forum) available to the CUNY academic community.

[†] CUNY has provided requirements to be included in the Blackboard building block upgrade that is being developed by Vanderbilt University