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The Capstone Project: Reflection and Analysis

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### Abstract

Technology generally does not move backwards, and today's students need to be prepared for tomorrow's work environment. As I have completed the MATLT program, it seems as if this is a common belief in education. This essay is a reflection and analysis on the Capstone Project for the Ashford MATLT program. It details strengths and weaknesses of these assignments as well as the design challenges that I faced while completing them.

### The Capstone Project: Reflection and Analysis

Even before entering the Ashford University's Master of Arts of Teaching and Learning with Technology program (MATLT program), I had a very progressive attitude toward utilizing technology in the classroom. Frankly, there are no more "non technology-oriented" jobs left in America. Even a cashier at a McDonalds restaurant has to be able to use computerized registers now. It is important to the entire country that our employee base be as well prepared as possible. Frankly, if we don't, we could be forcing our country in a similar situation as China; massive numbers of people with manual labor abilities being their main skill. I believe it is the role of a teacher/trainer to utilize technology to the upmost of his/her available capacity. I believe that they not only should be able to utilize what most school districts can provide, but also stay knowledgeable about upcoming possibilities as well and make their students aware of them. Technology generally does not move backwards, and today's students need to be prepared for tomorrow's work environment. With my completion of the MATLT program, it seems as if this is a common belief in education. This essay is a reflection and analysis on the Capstone Project for the Ashford MATLT program. It details strengths and weaknesses of the final assignments as well as the design challenges that I faced while completing them.

The best aspect of the Capstone Project was the decision on the part of the course designers to have students create their projects in a presentation format. Most MATLT students are likely to choose PowerPoint, as many schools purchase or are given Microsoft Office as a package. It is a user friendly program that allows students to showcase the knowledge and skill of many multimedia facets, a focus of the MATLT program. This is especially helpful as the MATLT program is an accelerated course and students have only 6 weeks to complete the assignments. When working under tight time constraints it is best for students to be able to work with technology that they are either familiar with or can easily learn. While there is some

acclimation needed; both Word, the program required for written assignments in the MATLT program, and PowerPoint are made by Microsoft and so most aspects and functions are similar and familiar.

Eliminating the need for a Word document in accompaniment with the presentation was also a good decision. This degree was designed to teach students about educational technology for instructors. While instructors will need page layout skills, they will need the skills involved in creating engaging multi-media lessons for their students much more. MATLT students can show this more readily in a PowerPoint than in a Word document. I personally have many years in graphic design and layout experience so I did not have issues in that arena; however, drag and drop programs, such as PowerPoint, are very easy to understand and work with. This is a great feature for those with lower technological skills or little time with borrowed technology. I could make the suggestion that Ashford offer a short tutorial on PowerPoint options, or offer a link to such a place; however as MATLT students, we should already know how to seek any information pertaining to any subject we wish.

Dealing with the ePortfolio with Ashford's Portfolio Builder programming; however, was a true trial in patience and fortitude. As I mentioned numerous times, I felt as if I had been taken back at least ten years in layout technology. If nothing else, drag and drop programs have been out for a very long time, in relation to technology. While I had many difficulties with Blackboard Portfolio Builder in the beginning, and still believe it is an inferior product, it was easier to use in the Capstone Project than it was in the Portfolio Building course. This may have been because, as I was told by technicians, that Ashford had made a switch on the portfolio builder software and the new software had not been fully tested before the original portfolio building course began. It was explained to me that the change was made to keep the cost of the MATLT program down. It may be that the technicians have worked many of the former bugs out since then. There

are still some aspects of the program I dislike, especially for students with low technical skills and/or little to no graphic design/layout experience.

My portfolio building course was situated at the middle of my program. I have mixed feelings about this. If the course was in the beginning of the program, students could be gathering artifacts as they went along in the program; if the course was closer to the end, many artifacts would already be done. In general I am undecided where the best place would be; however, I think that it broke the educational flow of teaching/learning concepts with a topic that is more career orientated where it was. Once the portfolio builder program began actually working and I understood the functions and concepts better, it went much more smoothly.

As I mentioned, I was very forward thinking about utilizing technology in the classroom before entering the Ashford University's MATLT program. In my opinion, it is the role of teachers and trainers to employ technology to the utmost of their available capacity. Not only should they be proficient in what most school districts can provide, but also stay educated about upcoming possibilities and enlighten their students also. Modern students need to be prepared for tomorrow's work environment; technology generally does not move backwards. I have seen this belief reflected as I completed the MATLT program. This essay has detailed strengths and weaknesses of the final assignments as well as the design challenges that I faced while completing them as a reflection and analysis on the Capstone Project for the Ashford MATLT program.