

## **Technical Education Meets Academics Online: Nebraska Joins The NROC Network**

MONTEREY, Calif., November 10, 2008 –Teaching physics concepts in the automotive lab. Adding Advanced Placement course opportunities for high school students. Helping students succeed in classes they previously failed. Finding new ways for classroom faculty to teach core subjects. These tasks might seem unrelated but Nebraska’s Partnerships for Innovation (PFI) has found a way to help schools statewide accomplish these goals and more, through a supporting membership in the National Repository of Online Courses (NROC).

“We want to offer very rigorous, highly interactive and engaged coursework in current technical education and provide a place for secondary and postsecondary educators to come together to expand online learning opportunities. NROC is helping us do this,” said PFI’s administrative director Erika Volker.

NROC’s library of top notch online courses utilizes a wide array of digital media options such as interactive simulations, flash objects and iPod downloads to give students easily accessible pathways into dozens of subjects, ranging from physics to U.S. history. This multimedia platform brings online learning to a new level and gives educators flexibility in using all or part of the material as teaching tools. Plus, each course is designed to align with popular textbooks. A special free website is already available, so Nebraska students and educators can start accessing NROC courses now, at [www.hippocampus.org/myHippo/?user=myPFI](http://www.hippocampus.org/myHippo/?user=myPFI).

According to Volker, the NROC content will give career and technical faculty ways to infuse academic concepts into their lesson plans. Additionally, it will provide a venue for high school students to earn college credit by enrolling in dual credit classes online. Connecting academics to career education fulfills the requirements of the 2006 Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act (Perkins IV) and allows PFI to utilize these federal funds to purchase Nebraska’s statewide NROC membership.

The versatility of NROC membership lets school districts serve diverse populations across Nebraska by customizing NROC materials to meet the specific needs of their students and faculty.

“Our school administrators and staff are excited about using NROC because it’s going to provide more opportunity at less cost,” said Gordon Roethemeyer, executive director of the Nebraska Distance Education Council (NDEC).

One way they’ll curb costs is by using NROC’s unique social authoring model to develop new courses. Educators, administrators, technologists and designers from around the globe use the NROC Network, combining their skills and experience to forge new content and refine existing course materials. This collaborative method, within NROC’s non-profit structure, creates high quality courses for a very reasonable cost.

“NROC is a valuable tool for us. Teachers can work together through the network and use NROC courses as templates to design new online classes,” said Roethemeyer.

Omaha Public Schools (OPS), the largest school district in Nebraska, got on board with NROC a couple of years ago. Rachel Wise, Director of Secondary Education for OPS, said the district initially customized NROC courses to quickly create an online credit recovery program aligned with their standards and

curriculum. Now they are creating their own repository of online classes using NROC's content and social authoring methods as a model.

"NROC provides quality multimedia rich curriculum and course resources. We had the option of using complete courses or customizing the content to suit our needs by breaking it down into different configurations and pairing it with other resources," said Wise.

NROC is an open educational resource (OER) project of Monterey Institute of Technology and Education, supported by a grant from The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation. The OER movement is fueled by the belief that everyone is entitled to an education no matter where they live or what their circumstances are. By joining NROC, educational institutions support OER and receive a variety of benefits including customizable content, specialized support and professional development resources. NROC's content is also accessible to individual learners free of charge at [www.hippocampus.org](http://www.hippocampus.org).

**Nebraska Partnerships for Innovation** is a new consortium aimed at building statewide systems to accomplish program improvement and increased student achievement while meeting the requirements of the 2006 Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act (Perkins IV). The *Partnerships for Innovation* provides an opportunity to reduce the burden on local institutions to develop their own approaches to statewide agreements, technical skill assessments, data and accountability systems, and strategic professional development approaches in isolation. [www.futureforcenebraska.org/Partnerships](http://www.futureforcenebraska.org/Partnerships)

**Nebraska Distance Education Advisory Committee** brings together representatives from Nebraska's 17 educational service units to develop and coordinate distance education in Nebraska under the auspices of the Educational Service Unit Coordinating Council. [www.nebdec.org](http://www.nebdec.org)

**Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Technical Education Act of 2006** provides an increased focus on the academic achievement of career and technical education students, strengthens the connections between secondary and postsecondary education, and improves state and local accountability. [www.ed.gov/policy/sectech/leg/perkins/index.html](http://www.ed.gov/policy/sectech/leg/perkins/index.html)

**The Monterey Institute for Technology and Education** is a non-profit educational organization committed to helping meet society's need for access to effective, high-quality educational opportunities in an era of rapid economic, social and personal change. The Monterey Institute for Technology and Education was founded in 2003 as a 501(c)3 non-profit organization. Learn more at [www.montereyinstitute.org/nroc](http://www.montereyinstitute.org/nroc).

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