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Faculty Members Asked to Join XXITE Technology Initiative

Winthrop University

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Faculty Members Asked to Join XXITE Technology Initiative

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Quick Facts

◾ The faculty initiative is called "XXITE," which stands for XXIst Century Technology Excellence.

◾ The technology coordinator is English Professor Jo Koster, who knows that many of her colleagues may have mixed feelings about technology.

Jo Koster

ROCK HILL, S.C. – Winthrop University faculty members are starting a technology initiative to help them understand and incorporate social networking into their teaching.

The initiative is called **"XXITE,"** which stands for **XXIst Century Technology Excellence**. This week, an appeal went out by e-mail to invite faculty members to join an online community to collaborate in studying, discussing, critiquing, and employing new media. The Office of the Vice President for Academic Affairs, University College, and the Teaching and Learning Center are collaborating to develop this program.

The technology coordinator is **English Professor Jo Koster**, who already spends time online on sites like Facebook and Twitter. She knows that many of her colleagues may have mixed feelings about this trend.

"We've noticed that students are starting to abandon e-mail in favor of using social networking sites to communicate," Koster said. "For faculty members, this migration to social media raises a number of questions about and challenges to the ways we work with our students." Among these challenges, Koster notes, are students' desire to remain constantly connected to social networks, their perceptions about multitasking while learning, and their uneven comfort levels with using technology.

"Faculty are usually more comfortable with face to face interactions and using traditional information presentations such as textbooks, lecturing, and PowerPoint," Koster said. "But today's students may be more comfortable with online chats, videos, downloads and interactivity. Our challenge as faculty is to find effective ways to assist today's students to learn most effectively, and that means looking at the learning styles that are evolving in the digital generation."

The **XXITE social network** includes a forum, blogs, discussion boards, chat, and video and audio capabilities that won't be accessed by the public. The network site will allow professors to form groups with other interested faculty and discuss their work together online. Faculty members are assured that the site is totally private—only Winthrop faculty and staff can see and participate in the discussions.

Koster points out that **XXITE** gives faculty members a convenient space to talk about teaching and scholarship without having to go to meetings."It will let us explore the ways social media can work to build community and improve communication," she said. Faculty are already using the site to discuss topics like teaching with the flu, the pros and cons of posting class notes on line, and helping students master difficult topics. "Several research possibilities have already been posted," she notes. "This site can help with professional development for faculty as well."

Koster joined Winthrop in 1993 as a lecturer and was promoted to professor this summer. She teaches medieval language and literature courses and humanities computing, as well as professional and technical writing. Over the past decade she has taken courses to learn Web design and serves as the Department of English's Web coordinator.

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