

VANIER

CÉGEP / COLLEGE

NEWS RELEASE

821 Ste-Croix, Montreal, QC H4L 3X9 Tel: 514.744.7500 Fax: 514.744.7505 info@vaniercollege.qc.ca www.vaniercollege.qc.ca

Vanier College partners with the University of Mexico to explore online teaching

December 8, 2009. Last October, three Vanier teachers went to Mexico City to attend the SOMECE (International Symposium on Information Technology in the Classroom) organized by the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM). The trip was part of a new joint Vanier College-UNAM project aimed at having teachers from both institutions share their practices and experiences with the use of IT in the classroom.

SOMECE was an ideal springboard for the Vanier-UNAM project, because it brings together teachers and experts from around the world to discuss the use and integration of technology in the classroom at all levels of education, from elementary school to graduate studies.

Several recent Vanier pilot-projects added a unique perspective to the symposium's program. Marielle Beauchemin (Micropublishing and Hypermedia) presented her research on hybrid online courses offered at Vanier. Philippe Gagné from the French Department described using a problem-solving approach to virtual teaching within a hybrid course comprising of synchronous and asynchronous work periods. And finally, Humanities teacher, Sophie Jacmin, presented her virtual team-teaching experience with Cégep de Sept-Iles, a pilot-project in existence since 2006.

“This trip allowed us to meet people who work in a totally different context from ours and one where access to higher education is a privilege based on merit,” says Philippe Gagné. “While that is true here as well, it is even more so in Mexico where the applications for university far outstrip the number of places available. In this context, e-learning can play a significant role to allow more people to have access to higher education. Even so, I was surprised that UNAM offers online courses to 20,000 students and has 500,000 students registered with the university overall.”

The meetings were so useful that Gagné goes on to say that “We are going to try to set up a community of practice on line with teachers we met there. Like us, they are concerned with integrating forms of teaching that involve students in active learning exchanges and projects.”

“The Vanier College-UNAM project is unique in that participating teachers communicate in Spanish, English and French, and new teaching materials will be produced in all three languages,” indicates Judy Macdonald, responsible for teacher mobility projects at Vanier. “The project is also innovative because both institutions work in a multicultural environment with students and faculty representing many countries and ethnicities. The exchanges will therefore represent a great number of perspectives, not only national and discipline-related, but also truly global.”