

EDGE: ENHANCING DIGITAL GROWTH through EDUCATION

Warner University

Mr. Shawn Taylor, director of the EDGE project

shawn.taylor@warner.edu

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This generation of students, referred to as *digital natives*, *the net-generation*, or *generation tech*, is very unlike the generation of learners that graduated prior to the start of the 21st century. These *digital natives* have never known an analog world without the internet. Conversely, many professors are *digital immigrants* who recall a land where the clumsy slide projector, dusty overhead, and monstrous opaque projectors were “king” of the “high-tech” classroom. Against this reality, the Warner community completed a three-year process of selecting and designing a Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) to address a need particularly among first-year students in the area of digital literacy. Thus, EDGE (Enhancing Digital Growth through Education) was born. To this end, the Warner University EDGE project is designed to help equip students for a digital age. Research and literature reviews conducted by a steering committee indicated that the skills needed to lead and serve today’s complex marketplace are dramatically different from the skills needed in 1968 when the institution began.

The goal of Warner University’s EDGE project is to improve the ability of students to use digital technologies to *access*, *evaluate*, and digitally *communicate* information and knowledge. Two first-year general education courses are the primary venue for experimenting with methodologies designed to achieve the three student outcomes:

1. Search, identify, and retrieve information in digital environments. (Access)
2. Judge the currency, appropriateness, accuracy and adequacy of information and sources for a specific purpose or audience (including determining authority, bias, and timeliness of materials). (Evaluate)
(adapted from California ICT Digital Literacy Assessments and Curriculum Framework)
3. Adapt the information and choose a digital communication medium and format that best supports the purposes of the product or performance and the intended audience. (Communicate) (Adapted from ACRL literacy competency standards)

The goal will be measured using the ETS iSkills tool and internal pre- and post-class assessments. The administration of the assessment tools along with cyclical review and analysis pinpoints areas for improvement, while best practices disseminate to the community. A semiannual digital literacy conference will provide resourcing for faculty and staff.

The EDGE director and implementation team members oversee the project assisted by four working teams (resource, marketing, EDGE expo, and assessment). The membership on the teams includes faculty, staff, alumni, and students. Representation includes each school, library, academic skills, and directors of institutional research, information technology, and general studies. Forty individuals are directly involved in the EDGE working and implementation teams.

The steering committee has transitioned from planning to implementation with a two phase process and timeline. Implementation teams, the EDGE director, budget, resources, and technology support are all in place to facilitate the successful implementation and sustainability of Warner’s EDGE project to improve the digital literacy of students as they access, evaluate, and communicate information digitally.