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For Immediate Release

Teaching the teachers: GSU offers new certificate in online teaching

University Park, February 25, 2005 – Governors State University has developed a new certificate in online teaching in response to some staggering statistics about online learning: right now, more than two million college students are taking online courses – and the stats don't stop there. Online enrollment is projected to increase 25 percent annually.

Change is rapid, to be sure. But teachers are often more familiar with the traditional brick and mortar teaching environment than with the challenges posed by the bytes and megahertz of the virtual classroom.

"There's a comfort level with the traditional classroom," said Jan Engle, coordinator of Instruction Development at the university. "For a lot of teachers, it's their first and only frame of reference. They know how to help students learn, but are at a loss when it comes to translating their wealth of experience into the online environment."

Engle said that's why Governors State University has developed the certificate program. "This series of courses will train teachers and put them in touch with the untapped potential of online learning."

Engle, who helped develop the certificate program, said teachers are surprised when they discover just how powerful and interactive online teaching can be.

She said, "While the face-to-face element may be missing, the online classroom offers a real 'person-to-person' experience. Students engage in threaded discussions, group projects, live audio conferencing, and other shared learning activities."

Engle added, "Students find that in the online classroom they can't gravitate to the back of the room and disengage from active learning."

The GSU certificate, called the Certificate in Online Teaching, is a graduate level sequence of four three credit hour courses: Introduction to Online Teaching, Facilitating Online Learning, Designing Online Courses, and Producing Digital Content. Students who complete the coursework with a "B" average or better will be awarded the certificate.

All of the courses are offered online. Engle explained, "It's crucial for teachers who will be developing and teaching online courses to have the experience of being an online learner."

The Certificate in Online Teaching courses will be offered beginning in the university's spring/summer trimester. Registration opens March 28. Students must apply to the university to enroll.

The development of the certificate was partially underwritten by a grant from the Metropolitan Chicago Healthcare Council and the Promise of Nursing project.

For more information, call the Governors State University Office of Admission at 708-534-4490.