

2) Scenarios



In the original grant proposal in 1999, we included several “scenarios.” We did that because the BorderLink proposal described a multi-faceted, highly complex project, and we hoped that by personalizing the various aspects of the project, we could ensure that what we were trying to say was thoroughly understandable. In addition, while “Carmen” and “Mr. Lopez” were not real people, they did represent a realistic compilation of the students and teachers in the BorderLink Project. We have included the scenarios for you from the original grant proposal—and added end-of-project scenarios and comments to illustrate some of the changes that have occurred over the five years of the grant.

Scenario #1: Carmen in 1999

(From the Proposal)

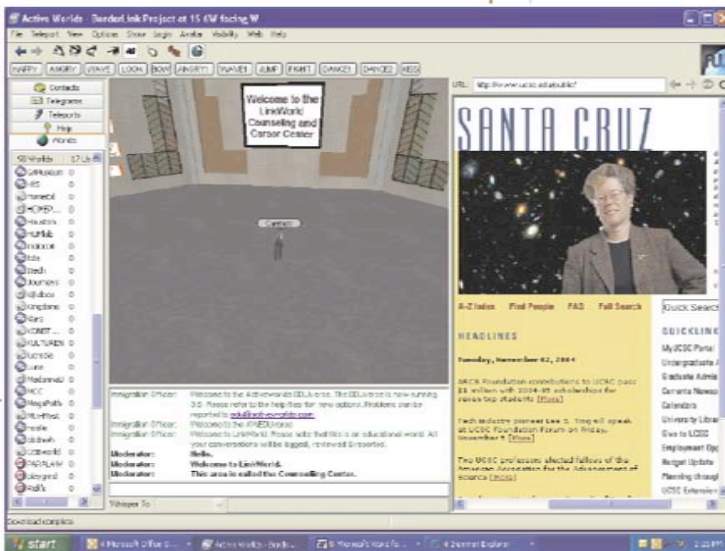
Carmen wants to go to college. She hasn’t said anything to anybody, because she’s afraid they’ll laugh. Her family isn’t rich, and nobody has gone to college. The place where she lives, while

rich in family and community, is isolated and economically poor. Carmen has friends who don’t live in houses. One family she knows lives in a tent, and they bathe in the stream that runs beside their tent. In the winter, the stream gets too cold to enter.

Carmen’s school is San Pasqual High in the tiny Winterhaven community in the California desert, and it is in a Quechán Indian Nation. Her school offers no Advanced Placement courses. They can’t afford to. The school can’t hire a teacher to teach a class composed of a couple of kids. Besides, where would they find the teachers?

Carmen doesn’t stand a chance of meeting the University of California admission requirements. Carmen has good grades, she knows she’s smart, she’s a leader in school government, and she is a well-rounded student. She is the kind of student that universities are looking for. But Carmen cannot get enough of the right courses to qualify for the University of California Santa Cruz, which is her goal. She will never go, and she knows it.

Carmen is a freshman. It just isn’t fair that where she lives destroys her dreams for the future, and she wishes something could change during the next three years. But what?



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Scenario #2: Carmen in 2002

(From the Proposal)

Carmen is so excited—she has been accepted to the University of California Santa Cruz! There are three people with whom she wants to share the great news because they were instrumental in her getting where she is today. She gets on the computer in her classroom and enters LinkWorld. She has had great teachers at her school, but she wouldn't have qualified for UCSC if it hadn't been for taking AP Physics and Calculus over the Internet and AP Spanish through videoconferencing. Getting A's in those classes gave her an edge—in more ways than one.

LinkWorld appears on her screen—purple mountains, giant desert sun, and small town. She quickly moves to the high school and enters the counseling office. She's in luck. The Counselor is in and can talk with her. Carmen activates the chat function and tells him about UCSC. The Counselor is pleased, and Carmen thanks him for all he has done over the last three years to educate Carmen about colleges and how to qualify.

Then Carmen moves through the three-dimensional space on the Internet to the tutoring center. She figures her tutor/mentor from UCSC

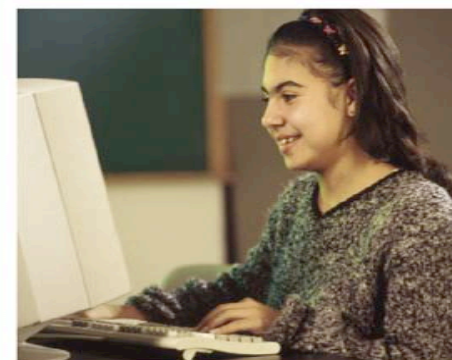
won't be in, but she can leave her a message on the bulletin board: "See you next year! But this time in person. I made it!" Boy, Stephanie was a godsend. Carmen feels like she never would have made it through those tough AP courses—she wanted to quit more than once—if it hadn't been for Steph who pushed her, encouraged her, tutored her—and held her hand (virtually) to help her get over the bumpy spots.

Carmen decides to wait to tell her AP Calculus teacher the good news. She will be entering a videoconference with him in a few minutes. She and one other student from Winterhaven are part of a 25-person class. The students are from all over Imperial County. And Mr. López, her teacher, is in San Diego County. He's one terrific teacher, and she knows that he will be proud of her accomplishment.

Carmen realizes that this wonderful thing that she has accomplished would not have been possible without new communities of learners. Location and distance have been defeated.

Scenario #3: Carmen Today

Carmen went away to college, the first in her family to do that. She had to adjust to living away from home, but she found that her experiences in the advanced placement courses



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while in high school helped prepare her for the rigors of college academic life. She realized that another thing that helped her in her college quest was the preparation for the SAT that the BorderLink Project provided. While she was visiting in Imperial County during her Junior year

in college, she appeared in a TV show that aired on cable television. She joined a panel of other students to talk about how they got ready for college and what college was really like. Carmen was pleased to do that, and she hoped that what she had to say was helpful to other kids.

Comments on the Carmen Scenarios

Carmen was not a “real” person. But her situation was very real. And the degree of poverty described was also very real for some of the families that we served in Imperial and San Diego Counties. Many of those families are not accustomed to seeing their children go to college (and yes, some did live in tents and bathed in streams). The BorderLink Project has tried to positively impact opportunities for people like Carmen. We’ve tried to instill a “college-going culture” in the students and invite students to picture themselves going to college - and then do all the things they need to do to be ready for college.

We ended up using videoconferencing for courses, but perhaps a little less than we had originally envisioned. There are at least two main reasons for this: 1) the organization

of videoconferencing classes is complicated across districts and across bell schedules, and 2) the University of California College Prep Initiative (and other providers) burst upon the scene in 1999 with very good quality online courses, Internet-delivered. We played an important role in these courses, although not necessarily the one we had pictured when writing the proposal. We learned how to support students in online courses to reduce their drop-out rates and increase their success rates. Online courses have played a major role in our students’ preparation for college. And, finally, LinkWorld does exist and was used to offer instruction, present student work, and link students with experts.

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Scenario #4: Mr. Lopez in 1999

(From the Proposal)

Mr. López is a new teacher. This is his first year at Borrego Springs High School in the California desert. Mr. López teaches advanced math. Today didn't go well. Classroom management has been going downhill from the first day of class, and he felt unprepared for the difficulty of the homework questions. Mr. López suspects it has something to do with his inexperience. The school was so desperate for an advanced math teacher that he was hired straight out of college. He hasn't even passed the CBEST test for all new teachers. He has to pass it to continue teaching, and he knows he isn't ready. The kids keep asking to use the computer in his room, but he doesn't know how to use it. He suspects that the great software programs he's seen demonstrated could help his students, especially the lower achieving students. He's always wanted to teach, but right now he's considering leaving to find another job.

Scenario #5: Mr. Lopez in 2001

(From the Proposal)

Mr. López enters the state-of-the-art training lab at the Imperial County Office of Education.

His school is in the desert in San Diego County, but he's glad the academies are being held in Imperial because it's actually less driving for him, and this way all BorderLink Project teachers get together at once. That support has been invaluable. But he's also glad that not all training is held in person. He's taken advantage of the Mobile Learning Lab for training and uses resources in LinkWorld a lot. But, for him, the best and greatest training of all is happening this year. He works with Mrs. Reynolds, who is a totally outstanding AP Calculus teacher from a school that's over 50 miles away. She gives a class by videoconferencing to 25 kids in seven different schools. Mr. López has learned so much by observing her class at his school—things about teaching strategies, classroom management, and math content itself. He's incorporated many strategies into his basic math classes already, and he's seeing results with his kids. He knows he's a better teacher this year than last year.

Besides, he can hardly wait to share his good news with the teachers he trained with at the Summer Academy: videoconferencing has paid off for him in another way—he took training workshops and now he passed the CBEST! Maybe he'll stay in teaching after all.



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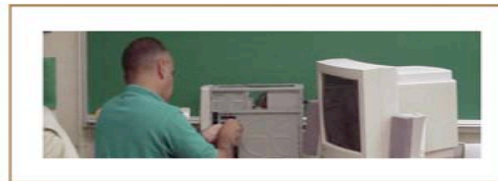
Scenario #6: Mr. Lopez Today

Mr. Lopez did stay in teaching. He discovered that the online AP Calculus courses provided through the University of California College Prep Initiative were very good. Therefore, in 2001-2002, he set the three students who were ready for AP Calculus at the back of his regular math class to work at a row of computers and take the online course. The online teacher was in another state, but Mr. Lopez served as their mentor. He found that his main job was making sure that they didn't fall behind. He also gave them academic tutoring support, when they needed it. Over the years, Mr. Lopez kept putting his kids into the online courses for AP Calculus and AP Statistics.

Mr. Lopez attended several professional development sessions. He went through one of the institutes offered by the BorderLink Project—and now the computers in his classroom never sit empty. He was trained on how to set up and use a desktop videoconferencing unit, and was very pleased to use the videoconferencing capability on his computer. He used the unit frequently to collaborate with other teachers, especially the teacher who became his informal mentor. He took part in one of the Innovative Videoconferencing Projects offered through the

BorderLink Project, and designed a lesson that used his desktop unit to link with practicing mathematicians to help his students understand that math is a real career choice.

He was pleased to be selected as the Tech Leader from his school. He participated in monthly day-long training sessions and learned in-depth how the advanced technologies promoted by the BorderLink Project can be used to support teaching and learning. He became so technology proficient that he became the on-site teacher for the GenYES and GenTECH programs, teaching a daily class period in GenYES to train students to provide technology training to teachers, and an after-school GenTECH program to teach students how to fix computers and provide tech support in classrooms. All in all, things are going pretty well for Mr. Lopez, and he is pleased that he is fulfilling his lifelong dream to be an effective teacher.



Comments on the Mr. Lopez Scenarios

Our “Mr. Lopez” was representative of new teachers who sometimes feel overwhelmed. These teachers often benefit greatly from professional development and collegial relationships with more experienced teachers. He was also a symbol of teachers who are unsure of how to use technology in their classrooms. Over the course of the project, we have offered hundreds of hours of professional development in how technology can support classroom teaching. In terms of Mr. Lopez’s concern about the CBEST (a mandatory test that all teachers must pass in California), the BorderLink Project actually started to create an online module to help teachers prepare for CBEST. Then we discovered that our teachers had other avenues to CBEST preparation, and we decided to place our design efforts behind other activities. We implemented the GenYES and GenTECH approaches to professional development and technology support during the last two years of the project, because, once established in the schools, these two programs are sustainable after the BorderLink Project ends.



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