I’m here today to advocate for a new role that goes beyond “instructional design” – the role of the technology enabler.
Hello, I’m Dr. Linda Merillat. I currently hold a faculty position in the School of Nursing (SON) at Washburn University in Topeka, KS, with the title of lecturer/instructional designer. I equate my position to being a personal chef. I just have to support the School of Nursing – not the entire university. We have 2 undergraduate programs and 2 graduate programs with a total of 536 students, 86 courses, 27 full-time faculty, 51 adjuncts or clinical faculty, and 8 staff members.

Instructional Designer is my title – but it is not what I do. My actual role is Technology Enabler.
The role of Technology Enabler is the true role I have played throughout my professional career and it has always been about the challenge of how to successfully use the latest technology and to integrate it into an organization.
So, what do I mean when I say, “Technology Enabler?”

First and foremost, a Technology Enabler in Higher Education is an Instructional Designer. It is someone who understands how to design a learning experience for students.

Secondly, a Technology Enabler is a Curriculum Designer. It is someone who has a bigger picture of the overall educational experience. It requires looking at the educational experience as a whole, not just at this specific module and its objectives, or this specific course and its learning outcomes. They look at how the learning experience is managed across an entire program.

Next, a technology enabler must be a technology guru. It is someone who not only understands how to use technology but understands how to harness the power of the technology in the classroom.

Another piece of this puzzle is that the Technology Enabler must be an Interaction Designer. Learning with technology is just a specialized form of user interaction. In this media-rich world, a technology enabler must be able to translate those principles of interaction design into the learning experience.

Finally, a Technology Enabler, must be an application developer. To be competitive in this emerging landscape, organizations must be flexible and nimble and have the ability to creatively solve the problems posed to them.
So, let’s see how this role of Technology Enabler translates to the real world and the impact it can have on an organization.
Having a Technology Enabler can benefit your organization in a myriad of ways. Look at the verbs -

- **Systematizing** and **Organizing** the Work
- **Offering** 1-1 Professional Development
- **Promoting** Best Practices
- **Training** New Faculty
- **Providing** Just-in-Time Instruction and Help
- **Finding** Innovative Solutions
- **Managing** 3rd Party Tools & Integration
- **Preparing** the Organization for Emerging Technologies
- **Moving** from Collecting Data to Providing Information
- **Streamlining** Administrative Process
- **Sharing** the Little Things
- **Contributing** the Bottom Line

A technology enabler looks across an organization to see how technology can be used to make things easier, simpler, better, more effective, or more efficient.

Easier and simpler comes from having a background in Interaction Design. More effective or more efficient comes from having a background in application development.
So, let's find out – what are your problem areas? Visit this link – tinyurl.com/y6y5onlo.

As you complete your poll, I'll go over the challenges I've identified while working in higher education.

- New technology is always being introduced and faculty need to be introduced to how to use it, but more importantly, how to use it to improve the teaching and learning experience.
- In general, technology in an organization is always under-utilized. My research has shown that educators tend to only use the most basic features of an application.
- There is a move toward more hybrid and online delivery models. Faculty are unprepared for this transition.
- New and adjunct faculty are always being introduced to the pool. In general, they are uninformed about teaching and learning best practices as well as how to use technology in an educational setting.
- We have an older faculty population. In many cases, they only need to use technology or aspects of it sporadically. They tend to forget how to do certain things from semester to semester.
- Higher education is very competitive. There have been drops in undergraduate enrollment for years. Institutions must continually find ways to deliver a better product.
- In some ways, students are more sophisticated with technology, yet their skills with basic applications such as Word and PowerPoint are lagging.
- Students today are used to media-rich experiences, but our faculty are not skilled in
creating and using these types of resources.

- Most recently, the COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted higher education for both faculty and students. Faculty and students need tools and resources in order to adapt.

So, let’s see how this role of Technology Enabler translates to the real world and the impact it can have on an organization.
When I first came to the School of Nursing, I was directed to implement Quality Matters for our brand-new online RN-to-BSN program. A large part of my success was based on developing a set of templates that addressed 37% of the Quality Matters standards right off the bat and saved me about 8 hours of effort for each course I developed.

Before, faculty would open a new course and find it completely empty. (Show BEFORE)

Now, we can support them with a set of templates. First, I developed a template for the LMS course shell. (Show LMS Template). Next, I developed a template for the syllabus. (Show Syllabus Template). We've further streamlined the process by the creation of a School of Nursing syllabus (Show School of Nursing Syllabus). This syllabus has all the technical support information and policies. By referencing this syllabus, it makes it easier to point students to the most current and up-to-date information. We’ve also incorporated an Online Student Resource Center in the LMS (Show Online Student Resource Center).

As an enabler, I developed as systematic process with tools for completing our course design. The Learning Experience Designer tool is a very simple, but powerful tool that allows us to map out an entire semester and see how the different elements of the course interact with each other. (Sample Learning Experience Designer).

I used my skills as an Instructional Designer to develop the LMS template, I used my skills as a Curriculum Designer to conceptualize the Learning Experience Designer tool. I used my skills as Technology Guru to leverage the capabilities of our LMS. I used my skills as an Interaction Designer to develop the templates to make it easier for our faculty
and students to use.

(Links available at http://facultysupport.com/presentations.html)
This is an example from a recent project on revising our faculty evaluation process.

Before, (show Before form) faculty have used the same basic form for the past 20 years, and they hated it. They felt the process was very subjective and punitive.

Now, (show Excel form), I designed and built a comprehensive form built on rubrics, implemented in Excel, and designed to be a formative evaluation tool. Faculty love it!

I used my skills as a Technology Guru to program Excel to work like an application, I used my skills as an Interaction Designer to make the forms easy to use and by promoting an iterative design process, I used my skills as an Application Developer to design the spreadsheet so the data could be exported to a database for meta-analysis by the Deans.

(Links available at http://facultysupport.com/presentations.html)
When I came to the School of Nursing, there was no formal process for onboarding faculty from a technical perspective. As a Ph.D. level educator, I understand the importance of research, and I conduct my own research on what works best. Based on one of our research studies, we developed a new faculty orientation checklist that includes specific training on the using our LMS as well as other topics such as using Zoom. New faculty orientation is given to all faculty including adjuncts. (Show New Faculty Orientation Checklist)

Faculty like to be in control of their learning. To allow faculty the flexibility to learn in their own way in their own time, I developed the Faculty Support Center at http://facultysupport.com. (Show site) The Faculty Support Center is a virtual faculty center I've developed and maintained for 10 years.

First, there is a section on fundamentals that includes an overview of Interactive Teaching Design. Interactive Teaching Design is an instructional design framework I've developed that is basis for all the tools and resources I've developed. Next, the tools I've developed such as the Learning Experience Designer and faculty assessments. All the workshops I've developed are available as mastery modules and can be downloaded as a handbook, or in some cases, a recording of the workshop is available. Presentations I've given at conferences are available. There is a Resource Library with over 350 resources I've vetted over the years. Finally, there is an Online Student Success Kit I developed in response to COVID that makes it easier for students who had to suddenly transition from face-to-face courses to online courses.
I used my skills as an Instructional Designer and Curriculum Designer to develop the mastery modules for faculty, I used my skills as a Technology Guru to understand what technology skills faculty need to know to be effective, I used my skills as an Interaction Designer and Application Developer to consolidate all my tools and resources into an easy-to-use website.

(Links available at http://facultysupport.com/presentations.html)
As a technology enabler for an organization, I also support the administration. This has manifested itself in many, many ways! As a technology enabler, I look for ways to streamline processes and to make things easier.

Data management, and more importantly, information management, in an organization is never easy. It's inherently messy. And in this case, our Before scenario is Chaos. There are dozens of separate documents and spreadsheets everywhere on individual computers, and everyone complains about not being able to find anything.

We've recently established a group to work on Information Management across the School of Nursing. (Show Information Management link) As a technology enabler, I help facilitate the process by giving the team the tools and structure to achieve their goals. We are using Miro (formerly Realtime Board) as a virtual white board to plan out how and where information will reside.

Most significantly, we've moved from collecting data to providing information. I've developed a comprehensive database to manage all the data for the School of Nursing. (Show SONIC link) Our School of Nursing Information Catalog, or SONIC as we call it, is designed as a central repository for all the data we need to manage the activities of the School of Nursing and to be able continually track and document the criteria needed to meet our accreditation standards. As you can see the topics are wide-ranging. This is an example of how a menu looks in a given domain area. This is what the SON Dashboard looks like - It has tabs for all the key performance indicators and reports with areas highlighted in red if an area is falling below the designated threshold. And to further
illustrate the connections, the faculty tab shows how the data from the new faculty evaluation form has been summarized so it can be used to manage faculty overall.

I used my skills as a Technology Guru to use a variety of tools to meet our objectives, and I used my skills as an Interaction Designer and Application Developer to develop a comprehensive database application.

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So, what difference does it make? Having a technology enabler can contribute to the bottom line. Three areas I have helped impact is our NCLEX Pass Rate – which is the key metric for a School of Nursing, implementation of our online RN-to-BSN program, and expansion of our Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner program.

So what is that impact?
That's a big number. And this doesn’t include the thousands of man-hours I’ve saved on the part of faculty and staff by automating and streamlining processes.

I’m not responsible for bringing all this money into the School of Nursing by myself. I just enabled it to become a reality.
Let’s revisit our poll

https://tinyurl.com/y6hb4sx

Revisit poll to see if others are confronted with similar problems.

As we can see, many of us face the same problems. Think about it. If you had a technology enabler on your team, how would you approach these problems differently?
In summary,

I’m advocating that organizations create a new role – the role of the technology enabler that expands the skill sets required of instructional designers to also include the skills of a curriculum designer, a technology guru, an interaction designer, and an application developer.

I’m also advocating that technology enablers be embedded within the organizations they serve so they can foster deep, personal relationships with the faculty and staff, and so they can be present to respond to opportunities as they arise. Many of the projects we have implemented resulted from an off-hand comment in a meeting that started with “I wish we could…” I could not have accomplished what I have over the past 6 years if I had to serve the entire university versus just the School of Nursing.
Having a technology enabler in your organization is about:

- **Encouraging** – Encouraging your faculty and staff to stretch themselves
- **Empowering** – Empowering your faculty and staff to do it on their own
- **Embracing** – Embracing the future no matter what it may throw at you
- **Enjoying** – Enjoying the look of pride and satisfaction on the face of the people you work to serve as they say “You’d be so proud of me! I was able to…”

Being a technology enabler is not an easy job. It has the power to transform an organization and the people within it to be more, do more, and dream more.
If you have any questions, here is my contact information.

I leave you with this thought- If you had a Linda, what could you make happen in your organization?