Office of Information Technology is very delighted to present this year’s Instructional Technology Innovation award to two distinguished faculty members who collaborated cross-discipline to develop software that impacts student’s learning. Our honorees are, Associate Professor Matthew Beckmann from the department of Political Science in the School of Social Sciences and Professor Marcelo Wood from the department of Neurobiology and Behavior in the Ayala School of Biological Sciences.

Dr. Wood and Dr. Beckmann worked together to develop a cutting edge online education system known as Rocketmix which was first used in Bio 93, a large core course Dr. Wood teaches. The software was designed to be engaging and educational for a student, and functional and quantitative for the faculty. Along with text, images, video, and data tables that can be manipulated according to student choices, Rocketmix provides real-time assessment of the students’ performance by recording the amount of time spent on each module. Rocketmix helps pinpoint unknown weaknesses in a student’s knowledge using questions and subroutines to bring up additional information that has been identified as misunderstood or unknown to the student.

This would allow students to learn at their own pace using a modern interface that brings them up to speed no matter their educational or economic background. A study conducted by UCI’s Dr. Andrea Nicholas have found a significant improvement in Bio 93 exam scores from a group of underrepresented minority students with low incoming Math SATs, compared to classmates who did not use Rocketmix. With its ease of use and effectiveness, faculty from the Schools of Biological Sciences, Social Sciences, Physical Sciences, and Education, have deployed Rocketmix to over 5,000 students here at our campus and it is being rapidly adopted by universities around the country.

This high impact collaborative effort, is an example of, outstanding instructional technology innovation, that we are here to celebrate. On behalf of the Office of Information Technology, I would like to enthusiastically present this award to Dr. Wood and Dr. Beckmann. Please join me in congratulating them.