

“708 students enrolled in 48 Fall online distance education classes”

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Bringing the
classroom
to the world!

Online Learning Tips



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Fall semester is well under way. Enrollment in distance education online classes this fall is similar to last fall. The same can be said for the number of course offerings available to our online distance students.

Spring 2010 classes have been posted to CALS distance education website. If you are thinking about offering your spring 2010 class online and have not submitted it, contact us so we can assist you. A limited number of course grants are still available.

Chunking Your Online Course

Research suggests that effective learning happens in small information chunks. Most people can understand and remember no more than a few items of information at a time. As the complexity of the information increases, the items of information we can recall decreases.

Chunking your online course helps you focus to prioritize and organize your course content. It becomes much easier to see what content is needed to meet your instructional objectives and learning outcomes for your class. Chunking also will help in determining what interactive strategies will work best, what technology tools will enhance your content, and also what content can be eliminated.

It is important to let your online students know how long it will take them to complete each chunk of the course. This is very impor-

tant for online students who have very busy schedules and have limited blocks of time to dedicate to their coursework. Many online students may actually take more time to complete a chunk because they can suspend the lecture to make note of key facts or replay certain sections to further understand the concepts being presented.

Three new courses for spring 2010 are: GEN 340, Human Genetics taught by Jack Girton; ANS 414X, Equine Nutrition & Feeding taught by Peggy Miller; and MICRO 302, Biology of Microorganisms taught by Nancy Bory.

Spring semester also brings construction to the Brenton Center. A proposal was submitted for American Recovery & Reinvestment Act of 2009 funds. Our project was approved for Room 13. The main scope of this project is to increase the seating capacity of this classroom from 42 to 60. Digital technology will also be installed in this classroom along with video IP conferencing capabilities.

Future goals include updating Room 9 and Room 8 with new seating and digital technology.

An additional benefit from chunking your online course is it allows you to make changes more easily when lectures are in the shorter format. This way new content can be inserted into the course without having to redo a long lecture making the course easier to update. It is important to remind students about how each chunk relates to the overall course objectives.

Engaging Students in Your Online Course

Successful face to face courses actively engage students with the instructor, with their classmates, and with the course content. Online courses are no different. Examples of engagement are guest speakers, group projects, feedback surveys, reports, and quizzes.

Today's technology such as Wimba has made it possible to bring in guest speakers for online courses. Wimba Live Classroom allows students to interact with guest speakers via microphone and webcam in live chat sessions or via the discussion board.

Group projects can be done successfully in online courses. Strong leadership is needed in each group. Asking for volunteer group leaders is a good way to insure that group projects will be successful. Each group member should have a specific role. Group projects should be designed in such a way that half of the grade comes from peer evaluation.

Anonymous course feedback surveys can be used to gather information about how the class is running: the depth, length, and challenges of assignments; preferences in communication with the

instructor; and the time they spend weekly in reading, completing assignments, and responding to discussion questions. The survey will provide information on their levels of satisfaction and their expectations.

Reports can be written or given as a presentation. The discussion board allows for students to post their presentations. Wimba Live Classroom allows for live reports and allows for students to ask questions while Wimba Voice can be used to record an audio presentation for posting.

Most online instructors will utilize a quiz to gather information about student learning. Recently, I found a new use for a quiz. Instructors in Off-Campus Programs at Central Michigan University sometimes utilize a syllabus quiz to reinforce policies, deadlines, expectations, projects, etc. "This type of quiz tests students' understanding of course outcomes, to stress their responsibilities, and to communicate expectations" says Ming-sheng Dai, director of the Center for Instructional Design, Off-campus Programs at Central Michigan University.

“109 WebCT courses have added Wimba Live Classroom and/or Pronto and 80 courses have add Wimba Voice Tools”

“FY 09 tuition dollars returned to the top three distance education programs:

- 1) Agronomy \$314,807**
- 2) Community Development \$81,284**
- 3) AGEDS \$81,235”**

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Web-base Video/Audio Lecture Gives More Learner Control

The majority of CALS distance education online courses utilize web-based video or audio lectures. This format allows the student to control the lecture by pausing it to take notes, replaying it to reinforce key concepts, or reviewing lectures before exams.

The Brenton Center supports two course capture systems: Accordent Capture Station used in our classrooms to capture two video streams (instructor and computer screen) and Camtasia Relay (audio and computer screen) which allows the capture of courses from any location on or off campus. Both capture systems have improved the quality of material the students view and have reduced the labor costs associated with course capture.

Several faculty are starting to use these technologies in their on campus courses. Their lectures are captured and made available online as streaming video/audio within hours of the actual lectures.

Some faculty have taken this approach one step further. They are requesting an on campus virtual section for their face-to-face course.

Advantages include, teaching more students with one lecture thus reducing scheduling demand for large classrooms and it also allows students who may have a time conflict to take their course.

Online virtual sections do require more work from the assignment side of the course due to the increased number of students and the increase amount of communication to those students in the virtual section.

Contact Todd Vens (trvens@iastate.edu) or Gaylan Scofield (ggs@iastate.edu) at the Brenton Center to learn more about using capture technologies for your on campus courses.