

Our mission is to deliver quality credit & non-credit educational offerings, provide reliable services, and ensure exemplary support for technology use in the College of Agriculture & Life Sciences.

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Bringing the
classroom
to the world!

Brenton Center

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Expanding Collaboration



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& College of Agriculture
& Life Sciences Distance
Education

Educational experiences continue to happen long after the lecture has been delivered to your on-line student. It carries over in the form of discussion boards, email, and other online posts.

A new set of collaboration tools are available in WebCT. Wimba Pronto, Wimba Classroom, and Wimba Voice are simple to use collaboration tools that are available to every student, staff, and faculty to use for learning or other university business.

Wimba Pronto

Wimba Pronto is the only instant messaging collaboration tool designed for education. It stands out because it enables both students and instructors to collaborate and learn in an informal virtual environment.

Since Wimba Pronto functions within WebCT, it allows students to see who's online from their WebCT class or study group and allows for instantly collaboration by chatting, connecting via video if a web camera is available, and by sharing their desktop.

Several of our online instructors are using Wimba Pronto for virtual office hours or online tutoring. This tool gives our distance students the same advantage to participate in faculty office hours as of our on-campus students. Wimba Pronto allows the instructor to control the environment for tutoring.

These collaboration tools are free to use because they were funded from a university CAC grant along with three colleges and two centers. During times of reduced budgets, these collaboration tools can be utilized to hold group meetings or one-on-one meetings without having to pay for travel expense or other technology expenses.

These tools are web based and the only other equipment needed is a computer with a microphone and a web camera (optional). A simple browser check is required to confirm that your office computer is equipped with the necessary items.

During Fall 09 semester, there were 105 unique WebCT sections using these tools with 12,238 accesses.

Wimba Pronto gives students more opportunities to contact the instructor. If a student is working on a course assignment and has a question and sees the instructor online, the question can be asked and help given. This allows the student to continue to work and finish the assignment rather than waiting for an email reply from the instructor.

Beyond the student-to-student and student-to-instructor connections, Pronto is slowly growing in popularity among staff for communication with each other.

Many faculty, staff, and students have used IM for a long time using 3rd party software. Wimba Pronto streamlines the process by gathering names and it allows all to see at a glance which students are on Pronto and it organizes them by course. (Source: Wimba.com)

Wimba Classroom

Instructors have long considered live, personal interaction to be the most valuable element of teaching and learning. Making this happen in online classes is a challenge that distance education instructors face.

Wimba Classroom is a virtual meeting space that allows online instructors and students to build relationships by combining interactive technologies with instructional best practices. It is simple to use and allows the instructor and students to focus on the content, not the technology.

This live, virtual classroom environment includes robust features such as audio, video, application sharing, content display, polling, white boarding, and presenter on-the-fly. Its ease of use ensures that instructors and students engage as if they were meeting face-to-face. It also allows for recording the session and saving it in both MP3 and MP4 downloads that enables further interaction between instructor and students.

Several distance education faculty are using Wimba Classroom to extend their online course. It is now possible to bring in a guest speaker and the presentation can be archived for viewing after

Wimba Voice

The majority of our virtual learning environments are limited to text, static images, or pre-recorded classroom lectures. Missing is the important element of face-to-face communication.

Wimba Voice is a web-based voice solution that facilitates and promotes vocal instruction, collaboration, coaching, and assessment. Wimba Voice incorporates the use of threaded voice boards, voice-enabled email, embedded voice within course pages, as well as live group discussions. It

the presentation. It provides for a flexible venue for instructors or students to meet, learn, and collaborate online.

It seamlessly integrates within WebCT, thus it minimizes training costs, and is always available for use at a minutes notice. The instructor has full control over it and is not dependent on long term planning and scheduling to use this type of technology.

It ensures that students understand their session since they have the opportunity to ask for immediate feedback. It also allows for instructors to answer questions in a group setting by giving in depth verbal explanations of complex material.

It has been used as the main delivery tool for some distance education classes, especially when live sessions are required. It has been used for numerous meetings and other collaborations. Spring semester will bring another use, supervision of student teachers by university faculty. It will also allow those student teachers to meet weekly and discuss issues related to their student teaching experiences. (Source: Wimba.com)

increases the interaction and student engagement level of any online course.

Voice discussion boards are great for brainstorming and collaborating and can be used with accompanying text. Adding voice messages into course pages allows the instructor to verbally explain complex ideas or simply highlight important ideas. Voice emails are useful for role-playing activities and question and answer sessions. (Source: Wimba.com)

Pod Cast Promotions

The Brenton Center provides free Pod Cast production to promote CALS Distance Education Courses.

Contact Amy Upah 4-9732

Brenton Center Services

WebCT Support
Wimba Support
Cantasia Relay
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Video Recording
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Distance Education Course Grants

A limited number of course grants are available to assist departments to convert existing face-to-face courses for online delivery to distance education students. Limited funds are also available to departments for: 1) conversion of on-campus Master's programs to an online format for distance education students and 2) creation of online Certificate programs for distance delivery.

The purpose of the grant program is to expand and strengthen CALS Distance Education offerings. For more information contact Dr. Gaylan Scofield, Director of CALS Distance Education & Brenton Center—ggs@iastate.edu or 4-0045

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