

Distance Learning Today

JANUARY 5, 2007 • VOLUME 1 • ISSUE 1

Highlights

A quick tech check

The equipment you need to succeed

Hello, Mr. Chips

How technology is changing teaching

Is online learning right for you?

Perform this simple self-appraisal

Giving distance learning the third degree

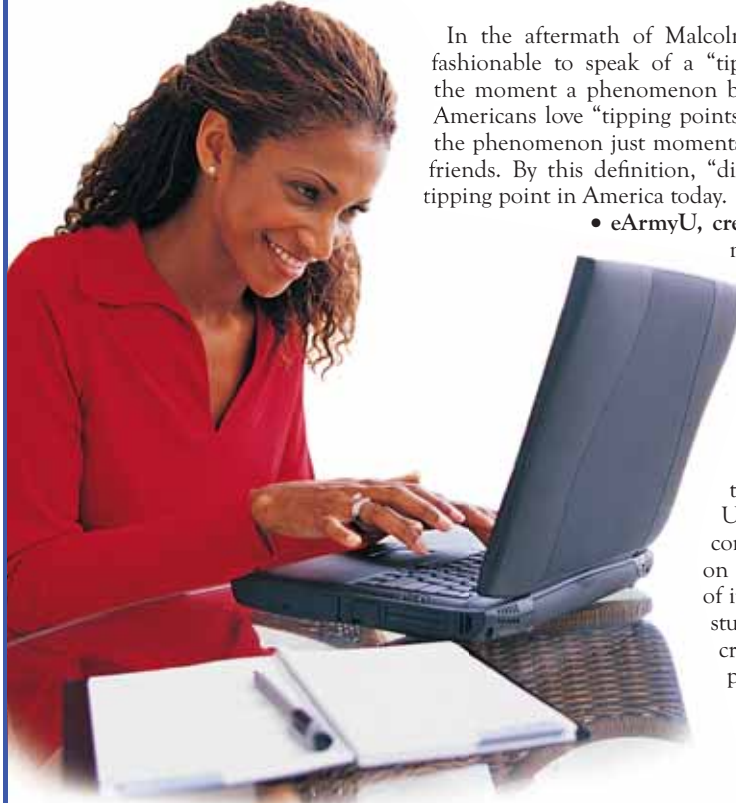
How to evaluate an online offering

The March of the "Millennials"

The generation that was born to learn online

A Close Look at Distance Learning

By Dr. Gerald A. Heeger



In the aftermath of Malcolm Gladwell's best seller, it is fashionable to speak of a "tipping point" when describing the moment a phenomenon becomes pervasive in a society. Americans love "tipping points," especially if they experience the phenomenon just moments ahead of their neighbors and friends. By this definition, "distance learning" approaches a tipping point in America today.

- eArmyU, created in 2004, enables eligible members of the armed services to work toward college degrees and certificates "anytime, anywhere" at 28 regionally accredited colleges and universities offering 145 certificate and degree programs.
- Last year in Maryland, the Board of Regents of the University System of Maryland – confronted with space limitations on campuses – mandated that all of its universities should encourage students to take at least 12 of their credits outside of the classroom, preferably online.
- In Mississippi, an e-learning center sponsored by Delta State University

Continued on page 5

Challenging the Myths about Distance Learning

By Dr. Robert Mendenhall

Myth 1 – Classroom learning is superior to distance learning.

Reality: The quality of classroom learning is largely unmeasured, unknown, and varies widely based on class size and professorial skill. Just as there is good and bad classroom instruction, there is good and bad distance learning. Nevertheless, there is a large and growing body of evidence (www.nosignificantdifference.org) that generally there is no significant difference between classroom instruction and distance learning. This isn't surprising given that distance learning at traditional institutions often is simply delivering the classroom course with the aid of technology – same course, same results.

The real question should not be whether distance learning can be as good

as classroom learning, but rather whether technology can provide even higher quality instruction. The potential is there, and beginning to be realized. Knowing that students come to education with different levels of knowledge, and learn at different rates, technology allows instruction to be individualized, provides open entry/exit, and adapts to the knowledge and learning style of the student. Classroom learning often reflects the opposite of what we know about successful learning: it is largely passive, linear instruction, which assumes all students need to know the same thing, that they learn at the same rate, and that the ideal unit of instruction is a four-month semester.

Myth 2 – Distance learning lacks important interaction with faculty and other students.

Reality: Again, this depends on the course and the provider – many undergraduate classroom courses have 100-300 students in an auditorium and provide very little interaction with faculty. Even with smaller classes, depending on the instructor, much of the instruction is lecture – based with limited time for questions and limited faculty office hours available for student consultation. It is true that some distance learning courses are structured as independent study without faculty or student interaction, but there are other distance – delivered courses, particularly online, that have a high level of interaction built in, including team projects (with virtual teams), study groups, instant messaging, and threaded discussion groups. The evidence is that in well designed online learning, there is actually more collaboration

Continued on page 4

Distance Learning Today

A CLOSE LOOK AT DISTANCE LEARNING 1

The economic, social and technological trends that drive distance learning

CHALLENGING THE MYTHS ABOUT DISTANCE LEARNING 1

A university president separates fact from fantasy

THE CHANGING ROLE OF THE PROFESSORiate 3

Teachers and technology combine their strengths

IS ONLINE LEARNING RIGHT FOR YOU? 6

Certain personal traits predict success online

GIVING DISTANCE LEARNING THE THIRD DEGREE 7

How to evaluate an online offering

MOVING PICTURES ARE ON THE MOVE 8

Digital video brings new dynamism to learning

BRINGING THE WORLD TO THE CLASSROOM 9

How distance learning levels the playing field for America's schools

EQUIPPING YOUR ELECTRONIC COTTAGE 10

Learning anywhere has certain hardware and software requirements

TRANSFORMING LEARNING AND TRANSFORMING LIVES 14

The remarkable reach of distance learning

Publisher: John Kelly
Editor: Kevin O'Neill

Fax: 973-335-8903
jim@boja.com

HOW TO REACH US:

Distance Learning Today
c/o Brown Kelly O'Neill &
Partners
79 Fifth Ave., 16th Floor
New York, NY 10003
Phone: 212-367-3900
Fax: 212-367-3917
dltoday@bkoadv.com

SPONSOR:

John G. Flores, Ph.D.
Chief Executive Officer
United States Distance
Learning Association
(USDLA)
8 Winter Street
Suite 508
Boston, MA 02108
Phone: 800-275-5162
Fax: 617-399-1771
www.usdla.org

ADVERTISING SALES:

Jim Oot
Bayard, Oot, Jones &
Associates (BOJA)
174 Chestnut Street
Suite 210
Boonton, NJ 07005
Phone: 973-335-8902

Contents of this insert copyright
© 2007 by Brown Kelly O'Neill &
Partners.
All rights reserved. Reprints
available.



Welcome to the first edition of Distance Learning Today, a new quarterly supplement of USA TODAY in partnership with the United States Distance Learning Association.

Distance learning is today's fastest growing segment in education and training. With millions of students on a global basis pursuing courses, certificates and degrees through distance learning technologies, the United States Distance Learning Association, www.usdla.org, intends to bring USA TODAY readers the most up-to-date information available about the options and opportunities that distance learning provides. Our articles, written by leaders from the distance learning industry and partnering advertisers, will help you better understand the dynamics and educational possibilities of this innovative form of learning. We hope you find this supplement informative and helpful in pursuing your own personal and educational goals.

John G. Flores, Ph.D.



Chief Executive Officer
United States Distance
Learning Association



If you would like to propose or submit an article for future issues of Distance Learning Today, please send all materials (including any illustrations) to dltoday@bkoadv.com

The Changing Role of the Professoriate

By H. Wells Singleton, Ph.D.

It is 6:30 a.m. and three professors board a flight that will land in Lincoln, Nebraska, where they will join counterparts from Gallup University, an arm of the well known Gallup Organization.

At about the same time, another team of professors is landing in Washington, DC, on their way to an all-day meeting with Discovery Education, one of the four divisions of Discovery Inc., located in Bethesda, Maryland. Later in the day, another team of five professors will join a conference call with colleagues from two other universities and research organizations.

In all three cases, Nova Southeastern University (NSU) professors are linking with colleagues from e-learning corporations and other universities to forge new, collaborative relationships. These multidisciplinary teams combine subject content and pedagogy specialists to develop customized instruction for new student populations in new learning environments. Unlike the traditional classroom requirement that every student, regardless of talent or experience, master the same content in the same order in a single timeframe, the new, customized education model turns the old model upside down. Now the needs of the students drive the curriculum and the instruction.

In the Gallup Organization example, NSU professors and Gallup University professors are developing a new doctoral specialty in education to be offered first to Gallup employees and later to Gallup education clients.

In the Discovery partnership, NSU professors are working with Discovery professional developers to produce training videos for hundreds of teachers who use Discovery video resources to develop new lessons for K-12 students. In the Science collaboration, science educators and

space researchers are developing a comprehensive master's degree aimed at space exploration. The degree will be offered online, worldwide.

In each of these cases, students will have the ability to select from online, face-to-face, or a blended delivery format. Blended delivery provides a mixture of online and face-to-face instruction that can be modified to meet student needs. Regardless of format, the focus throughout is on introducing new knowledge, or repackaging existing knowledge in customized formats that facilitate mastery of the subject.

Although customization in education is in its infancy, the day of one size fits all



education is about to disappear. It will be replaced by a new delivery system that provides customized, instruction for clients who will receive learning modules that contain "packages" or "bundles" on an as-needed basis.

For their part, professors are seeing a sea change in their role. Accustomed to presenting to learners who must attend class at a specific time and place, the new wave of customized instruction will see educators serve as powerful facilitators providing individualized guidance to each student. In this new role, every instructor will be able to view anything, anywhere, at any time, on any screen.

The old Sunrise Semester education model—designed to meet the needs of the industrial economy—is being replaced by the networked information education model. This new model provides the highly interactive, on demand information that takes full advantage of the power and potential of online, customized education.

In the new educational environment, a consumer will be able to view almost anything pertaining to education simply by flipping channels on a television set. The customized approach, moreover, creates a new and powerful door for distance learning. On one side, the public will have free access to an extraordinary range of information. On the other, which will require payment (or pay per view), will be more detailed information on the precise topic the consumer was able to sample for free and adequate for a degree or certificate.

H. Wells Singleton is the dean of The Fischler School of Education and Human Services at Nova Southeastern University.

Where in the world will your dreams take you?

By taking a real-world approach to offering career-focused Associate, Bachelor's and Master's degree programs, American InterContinental University strives to prepare tomorrow's successful professionals with the industry-current knowledge, skills and experience they'll need to pursue exciting opportunities in their chosen field.

Whether you dream of a future in business, technology, design, media production, criminal justice, visual communication or many other interesting fields*, AIU has a degree program that can help point you in the right direction.

Please visit us online or contact us about the campus and curriculum that can help bring your dreams within reach!



Call 1-888-906-9888 or go online to www.aiuniv.edu

- AIU Buckhead (Atlanta)
- AIU London
- AIU Online
- AIU Dunwoody (Atlanta)
- AIU Los Angeles
- AIU South Florida

*Program availability differs by location.



American InterContinental University is accredited by the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools to award Associate, Bachelor's, and Master's degrees. This umbrella accreditation includes the following branch campuses of the University: AIU-Buckhead; AIU-Dunwoody; AIU-South Florida; AIU-London; AIU-Houston; AIU-Los Angeles; AIU-Online (originating in Illinois); and American University in Dubai.

©2006 American InterContinental University. All rights reserved.

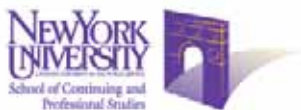


NYU Master's in Management and Systems (offered online)

This degree offers a unique, powerful convergence of worldwide best practices, executive skills, techniques, and strategies, with faculty who are leading scholars and practitioners. You can apply insights you gain immediately. Offered online, on-site, or through a combination of both formats, this innovative program is built on our reputation as a world-class educator and award winning pioneer in online learning. With in-depth study of Strategy and Leadership, Enterprise Risk Management, Database Technologies, or Systems Management, you'll be at the forefront of business.

Your NYU experience provides the foundation for a powerful network that will benefit you for years to come. Become one of the new generation of multidisciplinary strategic leaders. Find out more.

www.scps.nyu.edu/531
1-888-998-7204, ext.531



New York University is an affirmative action/equal opportunity institution. ©2007 New York University School of Continuing and Professional Studies

Myths... Continued from page 1

and interaction than is usually found on campus. In particular, professors report that it is more work to teach online, because they have more interaction with students (via e-mail and phone).

Myth 3 – Distance learning works well for some subjects/degrees but not for others.

Reality: This may still be true in limited areas, like laboratory science or engineering which require expensive equipment, but as technology advances it is less and less true.

In fact, much of the science and engineering being done in the world is now done via computer simulations, often among workers at a distance, so increasingly online learning resembles the workplace more than classroom learning. There are now high quality distance – delivered programs in most areas, including teacher education (Western Governors University/WGU), nursing (Excelsior), and even Ph.D. programs (Capella).

Myth 4 – Distance learning works well only for certain types of students.

Reality: Distance learning today includes every imaginable kind of student. It cuts across all age groups, ethnicities, degree levels, and geographies. It's providing

unprecedented access to education by allowing students to learn at places and times convenient to them. It provides huge advantages for working adults who can't fit traditional classroom schedules into work and family life. It has significant advantages for minority students because computers don't discriminate, and students engage more with ideas than with personal characteristics. Students who may be very quiet in a classroom may be very participatory online given the time to thoughtfully respond to questions.

Education is no longer a one-time event from ages 18–24 which serves us the rest of our lives.

We are becoming a nation of lifelong learners to remain competitive in the workplace and in the world. Distance learning is key to lifelong learning. Today, there are perhaps one million courses available online. More important, a great deal of the world's knowledge is available only to those who know how to find it online and to discriminate factual information from opinion. This skill, learning to learn online, will be a key life skill in the future.

Myth 5 – Employers don't value online degrees or courses as highly as classroom instruction.

Reality: While some employers still discount the value of online learning, this is rapidly changing as more and more corporations turn to online learning for their own internal training. Research from Eduventures shows that 62% of employers believe online learning is equal to or better than classroom-based learning. Many employers have come to value the traits exhibited by holders of distance degrees: maturity, initiative, self – discipline and strong goal orientation. Generally, corporate tuition reimbursement programs treat all accredited programs equally, whether distance – delivered or not.

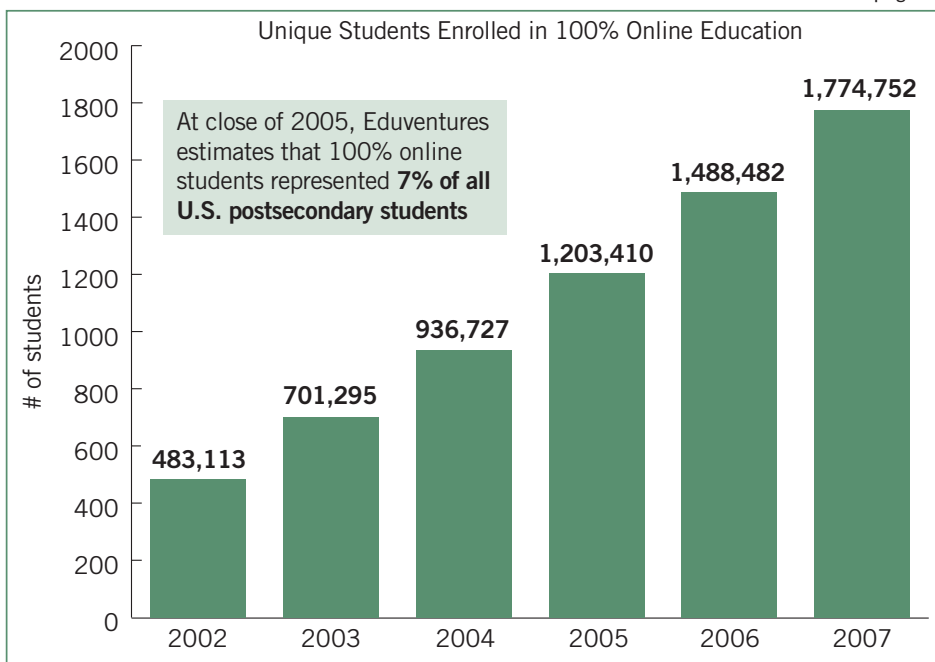
Myth 6 – It is difficult to measure learning at a distance, because you can't be sure how much time people are spending or who is really doing the work.

Reality: Our traditional classroom system is based on having students spend a certain amount of time in the classroom. Measures of learning are credit hours or clock hours.

As a result, we tend to feel like we have lost something if we can't measure the time students are investing in their course work. The truth is that even in traditional education, attendance is often not taken and students may or may not be in class. Ultimately, if they pass the test we assume they put in the time. Distance learning mirrors that system, awarding credit hours when students complete the assigned work, and generally not trying to measure time.

Cheating is a significant problem on campuses today, and cer-

Continued on page 13



A Close Look... Continued from page 1

is making college-preparatory courses available to students in high schools which couldn't otherwise offer them.

• American high school and college students are signing up for online tutorials in mathematics and science being offered by an educational service that draws on academics thousands of miles away in India.

• *The Washington Post* reported in May that "Online degree programs take off in the United States" with expectations of 1.775 million college and university students enrolled in online programs by 2007.

"Tipping points," "silver bullets," and "paradigm shifts" are all fascinating to cultural observers. In an era marked by rapidly escalating education costs and increasing social complexity, it isn't surprising that "distance learning" would become a pervasive topic of our time.

The origin of distance learning in the U.S. dates to 1881.

The topic is actually not a new one. According to Michael Grahame Moore of The Pennsylvania State University, the origin of distance learning in the United States is generally traced to the founding of the Chautauqua Correspondence College in 1881. It entered our university system through the establishment of an



"extension" division in the then new University of Chicago in 1892. Home study schools, the military's interest in correspondence education, and the "new" technologies of radio and television fueled the phenomenon through the larger part of the twentieth century.

Yet, for all of that history, distance learning never appeared to achieve much traction in the United States despite a majority of public universities, especially,

offering such programs. With the exception of the for-profit University of Phoenix, all of the "mega-universities" delivering education via technologies such as television, satellite, and the Internet are elsewhere – in China, India, Indonesia, Turkey, and the United Kingdom, to name but a few. Here, distance learning was marginalized.

Societal complexity, technological simplicity.

What has changed to make distance learning so relevant now? The technology has changed. Society has become more complex. Government policy is beginning to allow more innovation in the process. Growing consumer demand for education alternatives that can adapt to the pace of contemporary life are bending higher education institutions.

Technology has always driven change in distance learning. If "distance learning" is broadly defined as a process in which teaching transcends geography, it stands to reason that the medium by which content is communicated to the student would shape the organization of the content and define the interactions with the student.

As Moore notes, every modality of communication used—mail, radio, television, newspaper, audio conferencing, satellite videoconferencing, e-mail, and today's web-based systems – has shared a common pedagogi-

Continued on page 11

THE FISCHLER SCHOOL › YOU › THE LIVES YOU TOUCH › THE LIVES THEY TOUCH ›

What you learn here and how you learn it will not only transform your life, but the lives of everyone around you. When we opened our doors more than 30 years ago, we shattered the barriers of traditional learning, causing a ripple effect that can still be felt today. We're the Fischler School of Education and Human Services. Our ideas, our approach, and our programs inspire educators to inspire their students to move the world.

cause an effect › www.FischlerSchool.nova.edu 866-499-0784

FISCHLER SCHOOL
OF EDUCATION & HUMAN SERVICES

NSU NOVA
SOUTHEASTERN
UNIVERSITY

Nova Southeastern University admits students of any race, color, sexual orientation, and national or ethnic origin. Nova Southeastern University is accredited by the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (1896 Southern Lane, Decatur, Georgia 30033-4097, Telephone number: 404-679-4501) to award associate, bachelor's, master's, educational specialist, and doctoral degrees. 11-060 06/2014



CHOOSE AN ONLINE UNIVERSITY THAT LEADS THE WAY...

DREXEL ONLINE

Winner of the USDLA 21st Century Best Practices for Distance Learning Award.

When it comes to online education - Drexel University Online truly leads the way. As a recipient of the **United States Distance Learning Association's 2006 21st Century Best Practices Award for Distance Learning - the highest award in the industry** - Drexel's innovative, online programs are recognized for their international reputation of excellence.

While other colleges may offer online programs - Drexel Online exceeds all standards to provide you with an exceptional learning experience that will truly make your online education stand apart from the rest.

Find out more about Drexel's online bachelor's, master's, and certificate programs today at www.online-drexel.com.

Business
Communications
Engineering
Nursing
Technology

Clinical Research
Education
Library Science
Psychology



Drexel Online. A Better U.™

www.online-drexel.com | 866.440.1949 | info@drexel.com
Drexel eLearning, P.O. Box 34729, Philadelphia, PA 19101

Is Online Learning Right for You? Certain personal traits predict success online

By Andrew Gansler

Online courses can be a terrific way to both pick up the education you need and still be able to work, parent, or juggle the many commitments that define most adult lives. But is it right for you?

One way to find out is to think through some of the issues you may confront as an online student. eLearners.com®, a leading resource for connecting students with online education, has studied the characteristics that define successful online learners.

- How important is face-to-face interaction with your teacher and classmates? Some students find that they learn better in the social dynamic of a physical classroom, and for them, a campus-based course is a wiser choice. Many others, however, find that they are comfortable learning independently, or enjoy the genuine, though virtual, camaraderie that develops among online students. These are the students who thrive while learning online

- How good are your computer skills? The best-case is that you're comfortable using word-processing software and the major Internet browsers, and you easily share information electronically. This will often include zipping and uploading files, unzipping and downloading files, and dealing with attachments. Although many online students are able to fix technology issues on their own, most online providers assume students may need a bit of coaching when learning new computer skills. The key for students is to not become frustrated by occasional technology glitches or challenges.

- How willing are you to ask for help when you need it? In a classroom-based course, your instructor can usually recognize

when students understand a lesson by simply reading their facial expressions. In an online course, it's necessary for you to let your teacher know immediately when something is confusing or needs further clarification — otherwise you can quickly lose your forward progress. It's important that you're able to ask for the help you need, as soon as you need it.

- How much time can you devote to your course work? Most online students find that committing at least twelve hours a week to course work and study time works best. Although some online learners can succeed with an average of eight to ten hours a week, these are usually individuals who have taken a number of online courses and have learned how to maximize the effectiveness of every hour spent

- How good are you at organizing and managing your time? Online learning works best for those who are well-organized, self-motivated, and able to manage their time well. If these skills don't come naturally to you, you can still succeed as an online student, but you might want to pick up a few books on how to improve these skill areas as part of your learning plan.

- How do you handle project deadlines? Part of managing your time well is developing and following an action plan for completing your assignments. You'll need to set a realistic timeline that reflects both the amount of work to be done and the time you have available to complete it. Most of us procrastinate some of the time; the important thing is that "deadline pressure" isn't your primary means for completing assignments on a regular basis.

- Do you enjoy (and are you good at) reading and writing? Online courses are



based on students' ability to read, reflect, analyze, and write. Assignments will include writing about course lectures, assigned articles and research materials. You'll be asked to provide written comments about classmates' comments and contributions. Test questions will often require essay-length answers. In addition, you'll have online "conversations" with your teacher, your classmates, and your virtual project team members. Since generally all communication is written, the stronger your skills in this area, the better off you'll be.

Continued on page 15

Giving Distance Learning the Third Degree

By John. F. Ebersole

1. Is the offering institution regionally accredited?

Unlike other parts of the world, regional accreditation is the highest form of institutional accreditation in the U.S. It provides a type of quality assurance necessary for most tuition assistance programs, the transferability of credits earned, and the ultimate recognition of any degree awarded. Go to www.ed.gov/admins/finaid/accreditation_pg7.html for information regarding accreditation.

2. What is the success rate for students who enter the program?

Do students who enroll finish? High drop out rates often indicate a poorly designed, or delivered, program.

3. Will the offering institution allow you to sample a course, before making a financial commitment?

While a growing number of students around the world are

pursuing entire degree programs online, the experience is not for everyone. See if it is right for you before making a final decision.

4. What support services exist to help ensure your success? Can you register and order books online? Access tutors or advisors?

The uniform accreditation standards for distance education programs, as adopted by the six regional U.S. accrediting bodies, require that those student services typically found on a campus also be available online. This includes library access, financial aid counseling, registration services, etc.

5. Can you truly study “anytime” and “anyplace” to complete the program being considered?

Most distance programs allow for asynchronous study (student and faculty interact through online posting at different times) but some may require all students in a course to be online at the same time.

Some institutions also require that some time be spent on campus. Such expectations should be understood upfront.

6. Will the institution that you are considering provide you with contact information of graduates?

While a positive testimonial is not a guarantee, even a short conversation may provide valuable insight into the quality of the program.

7. What about the faculty?

While a concern for faculty mix is not unique to online learning, it can help in your evaluation of “fit.” Adult students typically report that they are most satisfied with programs, regardless of discipline, which feature a blend of academics, who can provide a theoretical foundation, and practitioners, who can speak to their application.

8. What financial aid options are available?

Reputable distance education providers typically offer a variety

of financial aid programs, as well as qualifying for employer – provided tuition assistance. If your program does not qualify for Title IV Financial Aid Programs, find out why.

9. How long has the institution been offering education at a distance?

While historic performance is not a guarantee of future quality or success, it is a factor to be considered.

10. What is the reputation of the offering institution? Is the college/university widely known?

Unfortunately, there are many bogus “institutions”, which advertise online and in print, with names that are similar to those of legitimate colleges and universities. Such operations are not accredited, though they may claim otherwise. Do your homework.

John F. Ebersole is the president of Excelsior College.

UMassOnline

Because Quality Matters.

Has life gotten in the way of finally finishing your degree? UMassOnline can help. Achieve your goal with flexible, convenient and highly regarded online degree completion programs taught by world-class faculty:

- Bachelor of Arts Degree Completion Program
- Bachelor of Arts in Psychology
- Bachelor's Degree: Early Care and Education Concentration
- BS in Nursing for Registered Nurses
- Bachelor of Business Administration
- Bachelor of Liberal Arts
- Bachelor of Science in Hospitality and Tourism Management
- Bachelor of Science in Information Technology
- Bachelor's Degree in Information Technology: Business Minor
- RN to BS (Nursing)

So you can keep your job, or raise a family, and still meet the demands of everyday living while you pursue your educational goals.

Concepts of Family Care (NUR 332)

Location: Kitchen

Time: Naptime

Introduction to application of nursing process to the family. Students will draw from a variety of theories and conceptual frameworks to guide the



www.UMassOnline.net

Moving Pictures are on the Move

By Michael Baker

Henry Ford's impact reached far beyond the automotive industry when he began mass producing Model Ts in the early 1900s. Ford's affordable cars paved the way for roads that today connect us to work, friends, family, and all points in between. Similarly, the printing press transformed society in unexpected ways. Widespread book and pamphlet distribution galvanized citizens to overthrow repressive governments and enabled new ideas to take hold at lightning speeds. Importantly, making books available to the masses dramatically redefined formal education.

There is a similar revolution underway that is changing how we communicate. Digital video is impacting nearly every intersection of society because it provides communications quickly, clearly, and with unparalleled vibrancy and emotion.

VBrick Systems, Polycom, Cisco Systems, and other vendors use Internet Protocol (IP) technology to provide dynamic visual communication via the Internet and corporate networks. Today's reliable network "highways" support IP video, audio, and data "traffic" seamlessly and economically. These factors are creating a market for on-demand rich media content that will more than double from \$410 million in 2005 to \$970 million in 2007, according to industry analyst firm Wainhouse Research.



CNN and other news websites are expanding their online video segments to address consumers' demand for world events as they happen. Businesses increasingly use webcasts and podcasts to drive sales with targeted messages. Internally, organizations are streaming timely information to employee desktops across the globe. In traditional K-12 and higher education environments, digital video is dramatically expanding classroom horizons.

Empowering Students for Success

How do you teach effectively when each person's learning style is as unique as a fingerprint? The answer to that question has changed dramatically since the one-size-fits-all teaching philosophy of the one-room schoolhouse era.

The Edina Public School District near Minneapolis illustrates how IP video integrates tightly with education initiatives and district operations to support its more than 7,500 students. Edina provides classrooms with on-demand access to its centralized video library, streams live events and cable television, and distributes morning announcements and additional programming that students and teachers develop.

"We are committed to embracing technologies that prepare our children to succeed by promoting learning, enhancing communication, and inspiring creativity," said Dr. Michael Burke, director of District Media and Technology Services at the Edina Public School District near Minneapolis. "Our technology provides additional tools to support varied learning styles and to enhance student achievement."

Bolstering Online Learning Capabilities

Schools are adapting to support distance learning demand. In higher education, 90% of four-year public institutions and more than 50% of four-year private institutions offer online education, while approximately 25% of K-12 public schools offer e-learning, according to the United States Department of Education.

Great Plains Cultivates Online Learning

Oklahoma State University in Stillwater is using robust IP video and multimedia to simplify access to information and foster collaboration for the classroom, research initiatives, and campus life. "As we prepare for new challenges and opportunities, we are committed to adopting new technologies that simplify and expand our ability to educate and support our community," said Dr. Marlene Strathe, provost and senior vice president, Academic Affairs, Oklahoma State University (OSU).

OSU professors gain powerful teaching tools by showing video

Continued on page 15



Brad Bartholomew - Photographer - Denver, Colo. - SCAD e-Learning student

SCAD (n.) See e-Learning.

Advance your career by furthering your education completely online through SCAD's award-winning e-Learning degree programs. Scholarships are available.

**Savannah College
of Art and Design**

ATLANTA · LA CROSSE · SAVANNAH · E-LEARNING

www.scad.edu

Bringing the World to the Classroom

Increasing educational equity and resources through distance and blended learning

By Russ Colbert

In a world driven by technology, people are perpetually in motion and virtually always connected. With ready access to cell phones, instant messaging, e-mail, On-Star®, Blackberry®, Bluetooth® and other mobile technologies, people can accomplish just about anything on-the-go. These technologies have transformed our learning institutions.

Technology is especially potent for students in the 21st century. Students now have the ability to effortlessly multi-task: listening to music while writing a report, soliciting help from friends through instant-messaging as they do homework, and using multiple, portable media devices simultaneously. This ability distinguishes them from any previous generation.

“Millennial” is the term most commonly used to describe students of this generation. According to a recent report from The Pew Internet & American Life Project, nine out of ten American teenagers are proficient Internet users with more than half using broadband connections on a regular basis.

Importantly, this passion for technology has raised student expectations of a learning experience. Schools and educators find increasingly that they must create non-traditional learning environments. Typically, they design an offering that combines traditional classroom tactics with technologies

These learning environments meet the needs of millennial students by providing an anytime, anywhere experience that is self-paced, multi-dimensional, interactive and engaging.

You have high standards

So do we!

- ▶ **Highly accredited** (regionally and nationally)
- ▶ **Highly affordable** (half of what comparable schools charge)
- ▶ **Highly flexible** (study when and where you choose)

Not all online universities are alike. *At WGU, we're different... in all the right ways.* No other online school is as committed to your success. And to providing you with the highest quality competency-based degree programs in business, information technology, education, and health professions. Using a personal, one-on-one mentoring approach unlike any other online university, our dedicated faculty mentors will help you graduate to a higher degree of success. If you're ready for something different—*something better*—you're ready for WGU. **You can do it!**

Call toll free 866.225.5948
www.wgu.edu/usa

WESTERN GOVERNORS UNIVERSITY
ONLINE. ACCELERATED. AFFORDABLE. ACCREDITED.

We have clearly reached a turning point. All over this country, we see evidence of a new excitement in education, a new determination, a hunger for change. The technology that has so dramatically changed the world outside our schools is now changing the learning and teaching environment within them. Sometimes this is driven by the students themselves, born and comfortable in the age of the Internet.

– National Educational Technology Plan, 2004

The Bigger Picture

The No Child Left Behind Act, enacted in 2002, set requirements that affected every public school in America. At its core are measures



designed to close achievement gaps between student groups. Its primary goal, improving student academic achievement using technology, requires that every child be technologically literate by eighth grade.

A recent study from The UCEA Center for the Advanced Study of Technology Leadership in Education compares virtual learning with traditional classroom tactics. It showed that virtual students outperformed students in traditional classes and acknowledged distance learning's importance to enhancing academic achievement.

However, funding the cost of these various technologies has been a common obstacle for many schools. Unable to leverage virtual learning opportunities, they struggle to meet government requirements and student needs.

Educational Equity: Overcoming Barriers of Accessibility

Legislation alone cannot provide equal access to educational resources and curricular programs. Challenges such as geography and financial support make it difficult to level the playing field.

According to the United States General Accounting Office, half of the 80,000 public elementary and secondary schools in the nation are located in rural geographies and small towns. For example, California's Imperial County is the textbook definition of rural, covering 4,597 miles and bordering Mexico and Arizona. 36,000 students live in this vast expanse of remote desert, served by 17 school districts and 59 schools. Clearly, geography puts these students at

Continued on page 12

Equipping your Electronic Cottage

Preparing for online learning

By George R. Collins

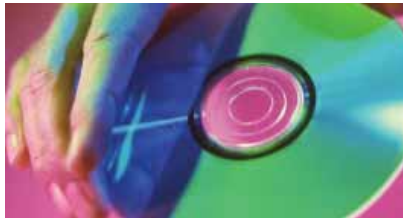
This year, tens of thousands of students will enroll online for the first time. How they outfit themselves for the class will directly affect the quality of their learning experience.

Four topics deserve serious consideration: connectivity, hardware, computer applications and the home study area you'll create. A common theme is dependability. Online classes can be intense and an unreliable interface can be a serious handicap.

Connectivity

Some classes require high-speed connectivity, some do not. Even so, while a 56K dial-up connection may be acceptable, it is seldom desirable. High-speed access is vital for complex simulations, voice interactions, or multimedia. In fact, televised courses delivered over the Internet are now a reality. DSL, cable, or satellite Internet providers are good, high-speed options.

If you will access your course from a work computer, check with corporate IT and the school about the protocol for accessing the course through a firewall. If you want to work



on the course from different computers, be sure to resolve access and workflow issues.

Hardware

Your school will provide their minimum computer requirements. Generally those technical thresholds are fairly low because the school's server is carrying the bulk of the processing load. Even so, there are considerations on processing power.

First, there's a common misconception that a web page is like a "snapshot" that is being downloaded to a computer. On that basis, if there's a delay in seeing the picture, then presumably a slow download is to blame. In fact, your web page was assembled in the "brain" of your computer from a complex series of instructions and then displayed on your screen. Faster processing means faster displays. Those seconds add up.

Second, and especially in science or art classes, the student may need to run fairly intensive plug-ins or stand-alone applications. Voice or video adds to the processing load. Make sure your hardware is up to it. If you'll be accessing your course from a corporate network, check with the system administrator to see if you can make the needed installs or modifications.

Beyond the computer itself, think peripherals.


Monitor. A monitor of sufficient size, clarity, and brightness avoids fatigue and will enhance your overall experience. A flat-screen monitor saves precious desk space.

Printer. Online courses require a lot of reading. Most students like the advantages — permanent, portable, tangible — that paper offers. While not essential, a duplexing laser printer is an asset.

Storage. Multimedia materials that you create for a class project require significant storage. Even in a text-only class, storage is critical. You need to systematically (at least weekly) back up your class work. Don't count on the teacher or the school's IT department to preserve your assignments. Note that a USB drive ("jump drive") is merely a convenience. Never entrust all of your course work to a single — "where'd it go?" — drive.

Computer apps

In almost every instance, the learning management software on your school's server will be your link to the online class. Ask the school or teacher about other software requirements. The most common software requirement is for elements of Microsoft Office. If you do need to purchase software, academic versions are available at steep discounts. It's likely you'll need to install a number of applications or



UNLOCK Student Potential

With Virtual High School's Global Classroom...


QUALITY ONLINE EDUCATION
70% AP EXAM PASS RATE
SMALL INTERACTIVE CLASSES
HIGHLY QUALIFIED TEACHERS

...all within your own school district!

Discover what thousands of students worldwide already know.

Enroll your school or student today!
978.897.1900

Virtual High School
Global Consortium



www.goVHS.org
a non-profit organization

plug-ins such as the free readers for Adobe Acrobat, Macromedia Flash, or RealPlayer.

While online learning is no riskier than other types of online activity, it's important to protect against viruses and spyware. If you've ever restored an infected computer, you know how time — consuming this can be. You don't need the distraction of dealing with an incursion during an online course or the ignominy of infecting a classmate's computer.

Studying


You should have a conveniently located work area where you can spread out your assignments and work at the computer undisturbed. Convenience is important since you're likely to access the school's site multiple times a day.

You want a good, open work surface, reasonable lighting, and a comfortable chair. In the occasional class that includes individual videoconferencing, your lighting and background may be issues to consider.

In truth, you don't need all the latest gadgets in order to be a successful online student. Technology enables distance learning. Good technology enhances it. The biggest factors for success — curiosity, self-discipline, communication — don't come from a computer store.

George R. Collins has a background in educational publishing, distance learning and contributes to special projects for the USDLA.

Currently educating more business Ph.D.'s than any other U.S. university.



NORTHCENTRAL UNIVERSITY
"The better way to earn your degree!"™

Business • Education • Psychology

Doctoral • Master's • Bachelor's

100% Online

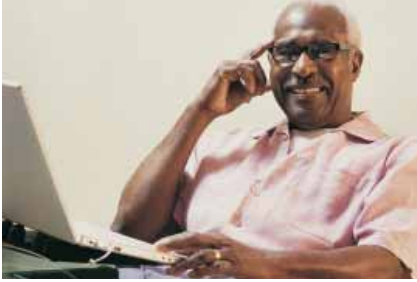
Convenient. Affordable. Accredited.

usat.ncu.edu

cal emphasis on carefully constructed “lessons,” organized to guide the student as he or she confronted the material at some geographical distance from the teacher.

While, more often than not, the student may be studying in the private quiet of a residence, that does not mean the student is isolated. Current distance learning students frequently speak of the strong relationships which develop within their “cohorts,” “study groups,” and “learning communities.”

Added to this is the computer’s simple ubiquity in our personal and professional lives. Once a “geekish” accessory, today’s typical American has countless daily interactions with a computer.



Isolation ends, interaction begins.

In the early days of distance learning, it was truly about distance. College and university campuses were scattered and often isolated from major population centers. Whole sections of states were days removed from higher education opportunities in terms of travel time. Today, the number and distribution of education institutions have surged and remarkably few people are truly isolated from a campus, branch campus or instructional site of a college or university. Nonetheless, distance learning thrives.

Perhaps the name itself is inaccurate today and “accessible learning” would better describe it. In truth, the issue it confronts is not simply distance but the increasing complexity and compression of modern life itself. The two-income family, the demands of over-scheduled childhoods, long hours at work, the lengthening commute – all contribute to the struggle of Americans to “fit everything in.” At the same moment, the disappearance of jobs and careers which require only a high school education, the wage stagnation of the lower middle class, the demand for ever more complex skill-sets, and the demand for more and more credentials to compete in the job market make a college education a basic necessity for achieving and maintaining a middle-class life style. The threat is no longer geographical isolation; it is exclusion from the security of the middle class.

Government awakens to the promise of distance learning.

Neither technology nor the social and economic needs of the new learner would be sufficient to “tip” distance learning into the mainstream by themselves, however. Organizations historically lag behind the needs of the individuals for whom

they are designed. Government policies historically lag behind the needs of the citizens they seek to serve. Universities and the educational policies of the federal and state governments are no exception. Gradually, painfully, both are changing, and the changes will expand further the promise and potential of distance learning. States, especially, continue to wrestle with how involved they should be in regulating higher education institutions which their citizens “attend” via distance learning. If the institution has no physical presence in their state, what is the state’s appropriate regulatory role? Currently, there are as many answers as there are states.

A challenge to America’s universities.

The greatest challenge to the “mainstreaming” of distance learning is the historic structure of the American university itself. The core of the university’s activity is grounded in the academic and intellectual autonomy of the faculty. In research, this drives innovational discovery. In the classroom, it can create wonderful lectures and lively discussions (but not always). In the classroom, the faculty member is central. The teacher’s mastery of the subject, organization of the material and face-to-face engagement with students drive the learning enterprise forward.

Distance learning offers challenges to this model. The faculty member must quickly shift to a new role, coordinating learning resources that might include compelling video, audio, and graphics as well as text. Rather than being a primary source of content, the instructor now facilitates learning from multi-media content. Properly designed and delivered, that content can be more consistently high-quality and creative than traditional classroom lectures.

That instructional evolution, which depends on innovative curriculum designers, technology support people, online advisors, and the like, requires a level of organizational integration that universities are only now beginning to master. Add to this the fact that distance learning programs require significant up-front investments which university leaders ever-pressed for resources are often hesitant to make, and the obstacles to distance learning becoming a widespread phenomenon in higher education become significant.

All too often, universities can succumb to the temptation to “ghetto-ize” distance learning initiatives, confining such programs to special units. Such strategies ill-serve students and keep universities pedagogically stunted in the sense that they prevent faculty from leveraging some of the core teaching and learning opportunities emerging from the new technologies.

“Going off to college” once underlined the experience as a special one.

The opportunities created by distance learning and the technologies which enable it are significant but not without challenges.

Zero Bounds Learning

Middle and High School Online Courses

➤ More than 500,000 middle and high school students will take online classes this year. Over 35,000 will take courses from Florida Virtual School with a success rate of 90%. A national leader in online solutions, FLVS supports students in more than 30 states.

➤ Discover the power of zero bounds learning. Call Global Services today at 407-317-3326 or email elarning@flvs.net.

FloridaVirtual
GlobalServices
www.zebolarning.com

Florida
VirtualSchool

To learn more about Florida Virtual School, visit www.flvs.net.

Online learning – with its ability to occur “anytime, anyplace” – expands access and opportunity. However, students may underestimate its demands. “Any time, any place” may be unmanageable for some. In a curious way, it may even cause some to devalue the education they’re pursuing. Many students move in and out of the online classroom, interweaving their academic work with the countless business and personal transactions that occur during their day. “Going off to college” may be a dated idea, but it once underlined that the experience was a special one. The student could see that an entire institution was dedicated to the learning project. Visualizing the intellectual complexity and institutional commitment of a university is harder for the distance learning student. There are new, exciting efforts emerging that could take distance learning to a new level. They should be encouraged. Any social phenomenon, after reaching a tipping point, may scarcely resemble its original appearance in the culture. Distance learning’s real impact may ultimately be the transformation of higher education itself.

Dr. Gerald A. Heeger is president of Whitney International University System, a new, for-profit international education initiative. Formerly, he served as president of the University of Maryland University College.

Bringing the World... Continued from page 9
 a disadvantage compared to their urban and suburban counterparts.

The Imperial County Office of Education (ICOE) decided to deploy video conferencing to deliver world-class education and professional development opportunities to its students and faculty. They knew video conferencing could bridge geographic gaps for students and make professional education for teachers – a requirement for instructor recertification – more attainable.

Through government grants and a number of community partnerships, the ICOE was able to put the infrastructure and equipment to work.

High school students recently completed a unit on the Holocaust that included a virtual field trip to The Museum of Tolerance in Los Angeles. They connected live with a survivor of the Holocaust – an experience not possible with a textbook.

A French club connected students through video to the French Language Institute in Paris. After 12 weeks, the students received one unit's credit in conversational French.

The administration and faculty in Imperial County have saved substantial travel time and money on meetings, guest lecturers and professional development programs. On one statewide superintendents meeting alone, the ICOE conservatively estimates the savings in travel and



time away from work to be \$18,000.

In the Midwest, Cooperating School Districts (CSD) of Greater St. Louis caters to 61 public school districts and more than 300,000 students in the metropolitan area.

Through CSD's video communications network, students in rural Missouri can enroll in classes at community colleges hundreds of miles away, putting them on equal footing with their peers when they enter college. Inner-city kids learn from experts as far away as Switzerland and visit cultural institutions throughout the United States.

Video collaboration is crucial to equalizing educational opportunities. For example, a typical class to prepare students for the ACT standardized college entrance exam costs \$700 per student, prohibitively expensive for many inner-city and rural families. By delivering the class over video, and spreading the cost between 61 cooperating school districts, CSD has reduced the cost to just \$125 per student.

Examples like these make it clear that access to content is imperative to leveraging the distance and blended learning experience for students. Content is accessible and there are organizations in place to help schools find it.

The Berrien County Intermediate School District in Michigan recently partnered with Polycom to offer educators worldwide a free searchable database to tap into educational content for distance learning. With access to more than 1,500 content providers, the database is updated daily with opportunities from organizations including Global Nomads Group, the Museum of Television and Radio, Cleveland Institute of Music, COSI – Columbus, COSI – Toledo, Globe Theater, Manhattan School of Music, and the Smithsonian American Art Museum.

Tight financial constraints are the norm for many school districts. However, schools have access to grants available for investment in technology in education. Programs like Polycom's Grant Assistance Program (PGAP), offer a free service to assist schools in finding and applying for grants, as well as free membership in distance learning associations throughout the world. Taking advantage of grant monies available for technology is the first step schools can take for future success.

Russ Colbert is an active Board Member of USDLA with responsibility for the Global Affiliate Chapters Program and Global Education Market Director for Polycom Inc., a worldwide leader in unified collaborative communications (UCC).

Earn your M.A. Online

Union Institute & University's Online Master of Arts Program is designed for adults like you.

Advance your career

Study anywhere, anytime


Finish in as little as 18 months


Concentrations in:

- Leadership, Public Policy and Social Issues*
- Health and Wellness*
- History and Culture*
- Literature and Writing*
- Creativity*

Mention this ad and we'll waive your application fee.

CALL TODAY
888.828.8575
www.tui.edu/usa





UNION INSTITUTE & UNIVERSITY

Offering:
 B.A. • M.A. • M.Ed.
 M.A. in Psychology
 M.F.A. • Psy.D. • Ph.D.

Myths... Continued from page 4

tainly is a challenge for distance learning. There are different approaches to resolving it. At WGU, students are required to take exams in secure, proctored testing centers. All writing assignments are checked for plagiarism. Many students have an oral defense (via telephone) of their capstone project. Ideally, distance learning will help move all of higher education to better measures of learning – what students know and can do – rather than focusing on measuring time.

Myth 7 – Distance learning is a quick and easy way to get a degree.

Reality: A few unscrupulous “diploma mills” have damaged distance learning’s reputation. These programs were never accredited, and do not reflect the generally high quality of distance learning degrees. Students may be able to earn a degree more quickly in some distance learning programs, not because less work is required, but because they are able to move at their own pace. Generally, though, the evidence is that students take longer, read more, write more and do more research than a classroom student (they obviously sit in a classroom for less time, leaving more time for these other activities).

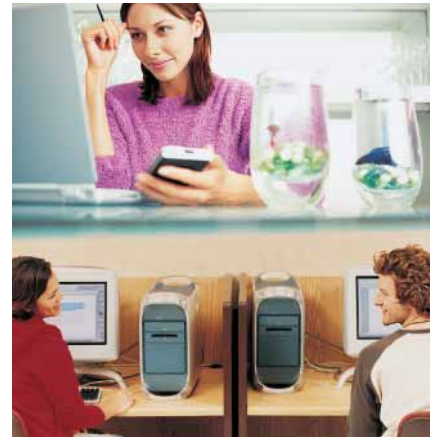
Myth 8 – Online learning diminishes the teacher’s importance.

Reality: As mentioned above, much of today’s distance learning is simply delivering classroom instruction via technology. In such cases, the faculty role doesn’t change much, except that faculty report it is even more work to teach online because students expect more responsiveness and interaction via e-mail. In redesigned distance learning that takes advantage of the technology, the faculty role is generally different, but often enhanced and even more important. Online learning can free faculty to do what is uniquely human – rather than deliver all of the instruction, faculty can have more time to interact personally with students, to mentor, advise, review individual work, and answer questions.

Myth 9 – Distance learning is less expensive to provide than traditional education.

Reality: In most cases, distance education costs are comparable or slightly more than classroom instruction. Institutions that have built successful, scalable, high quality online programs have found that the costs of

faculty, course development and maintenance, assessment, and especially student services and system support are significant. Additionally, the purely online institutions are primarily for-profit and self-sustaining on tuition, whereas traditional public education is heavily subsidized by state funds. Distance programs offered by public institutions are



often priced the same as classroom instruction, or even at higher out-of-state tuition rates. Because of these factors, the cost to the student of distance education is often equal to or more than classroom education, although the underlying actual costs may be less. Certainly technology has the potential to significantly lower the cost of higher education as it has improved productivity in so many other segments of society. The National Center for Academic Transformation

(www.center.rpi.edu) has demonstrated with 30 different institutions that undergraduate courses re-designed for technology delivery, resulted in an average 37% cost reduction, with significant increases in most cases of both student learning and retention.

Myth 10 – Distance learning will make traditional classroom – based education obsolete.

Reality: While distance education provides advantages of access, and potentially cost and quality advantages, our traditional education institutions provide important functions not replicated by distance learning. Particularly for young adults, our colleges and universities provide an important socialization function, which includes residential living, university athletics and social events. Our universities also play an important role in research, service, and even medical services. While distance learning is an important alternative in higher education, it does not replace the significant contributions of our traditional institutions.

Dr. Robert Mendenhall is the president of Western Governors University.

**Our Past...
Your Future:**
USDLA Celebrating 20 Years
Join USDLA Today!
800.275.5162
www.usdla.org
information@usdla.org
Annual Conference
May 6~8, 2007
Hyatt Crown Center,
Kansas City, MO
USDLA
UNITED STATES DISTANCE LEARNING ASSOCIATION
8 Winter Street, Suite 508 • Boston, MA • 02108 • USA

Transforming Learning and Transforming Lives

By Marci Powell and Wesley Fryer

Distance learning opportunities are surprisingly diverse but share a predictable common denominator: technology's transformative power to enable learning interactions that might otherwise be impossible for students and teachers alike.

For Dr. Cheri Toledo in the College of Education at Illinois State University, the opportunity to teach online has been personally transformative for over five years. This summer, although she lives in Illinois, the online learning environment allowed her to teach from Louisville, Kentucky, where her husband was competing in the United States Transplant Games www.kidney.org/transplantation/athletics), sponsored by the National Kidney Foundation. Conducting portions of her masters and doctoral level courses from Louisville allowed her to remain at her husband's side. Without the opportunity to teach online, she would have had a difficult choice to make.

The transformative power of distance learning isn't limited to higher education. It's increasingly present in elementary and high school settings. El Paso, Texas, while

having large populations on both sides of the U.S./Mexico border, is still somewhat isolated from other cities. Interactive videoconferencing technologies are bridging enormous distances for students and teachers in the El Paso Independent School District. Teachers on over eighty campuses are using portable videoconference units to interact with other students and teachers, across town and across the continent.

One district has found using desktop videoconferencing to be transforming in serving their home-based students. Clint Independent School District, outside of El Paso, keeps students who otherwise could not participate connected to their regular classrooms. Whether the student is dealing with a serious illness or temporary situation, parents, students and teachers alike are glad to have a way to stay connected. Following a car accident, a district in Oklahoma provided seamless education without interruption to a high school junior in a full body cast. In a traditional learning environment, this student would have graduated one or two semesters behind his normal schedule and classmates.

Distance learning's cultural footprint is expanding. Many museums, zoos, science centers, corporations and libraries offer enrichment content programming for K-16 learners, allowing them to interact with content and content experts outside of the traditional learning environment. Through online, videoconferencing and video streaming technologies students are able to connect beyond the walls of a classroom. They can visit with a NASA astronaut on the International Space Station or dive into math in Lake Michigan with a diver from the Aquatic Research Interactive. Learners can travel virtually anywhere, shifting time and place as they wish.

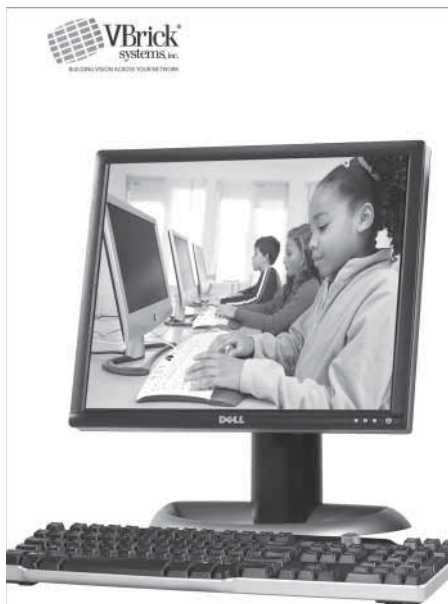
Corporations like Eli Lilly, Coca Cola, and Lockheed Martin are providing workplace relevance and real-world applications in ways not traditionally available. A recent example involved middle school students in Paris, Texas. They read *Flight 93 Is Down*. Reflection on the book's content inspired countless questions. The students wanted to know how companies react to a flight disaster and how they use data gathered from a crash sight to implement improvements and preventive measures. Through a video conference connection to Lockheed Martin, students were able to explore those questions by interacting with research engineers who have real experience doing just that.



The likelihood of American students going to exotic or distant places like Petra, Rwanda, or Mozambique is not high, particularly for inner city students. But, through organizations like the Global Nomads Group or Empower Peace, distance learning technologies are allowing students to experience these places. Both of these groups have connected U.S. classrooms to students and remote locations worldwide through two-way interactive videoconferencing and video streaming technologies. Students in Iraq and Bosnia have been amazed at the mutual understanding gained by "visiting" with American students. Peering down on a great temple in Petra via satellite video conferencing technologies provided a much richer personal experience than one can get from an *Indiana Jones* movie. Students can gain cultural understanding from reading a book but not like they do when interacting with their peers around the world.

While policymakers may put faith in curriculum standards and mandated testing to improve educational outcomes, it is the conversations we have and our students have which stand the greatest chance of actually changing our perceptions about each other, about ourselves, and about the world in which we all live. Increasingly, distance learning technologies are being used to not merely access information and content, but to initiate interactive conversations that transcend time and space. As high speed connections to the Internet grow, the potential for these technologies to transform 21st century teaching will accelerate.

Marci Powell and Wesley Fryer are Directors of Education Advocacy for AT&T. Wesley's blog and podcast about educational technology, "Moving at the Speed of Creativity," is available on www.speedofcreativity.org.



See how distance learning solutions from VBrick can stimulate classroom participation and improve test scores through video replay

Get more information on VBrick's solutions for education at www.VBrick.com/education or call us at 1-866-827-4251

and multimedia content at the push of a button. Students have on – demand access to archived class lectures and supplemental information for enhanced course understanding.

“Digital video is playing a key role in shifting how students and faculty communicate with one another, access vital academic resources, and support an enriched learning environment,” said Marshall Allen, director, The OSU Institute for Teaching and Learning Excellence.

Patient Examination “Instant Replays” Improve Medical Student Training

Medical schools continually update their courses to teach the latest medical advances for diagnosing illnesses and treating patients. Many medical schools are also incorporating technology to provide an added dimension to traditional classroom and training sessions. In Toronto, the University Health Network’s Paul B. Helliwell Centre for Medical Education is expanding traditional classroom and standardized (simulated) patient exams by enabling students to record, replay, and critique these exams using video on demand. These new digital video applications provide additional methods of teaching students important nuances of high-quality patient care.

“Gradcast” Provides Troops Overseas with Front-Row Seats at Graduation

Samuel Clemens High School is committed to its students and its community. Nearly one – third of the students attending the San Antonio – area school are from Randolph Air Force Base and Fort Sam Houston Army Base. School officials recorded and posted the graduation video online in May – making this important student achievement available to friends and family across the globe, including Afghanistan and Belgium.

Removing Distance Hurdles from Learning

Today’s wired society enables students and teachers to obtain information instantly – sidestepping traditional barriers of time and distance. As we forge new global connections and always – on connectivity, digital video will transform how we learn, work, and interact.

Henry Ford’s legacy began with the Model T and grew as he applied new technology to drive broader innovation. Similarly, today’s educators and students have the opportunity to use vast access to data and global collaboration to redefine how we approach business, science, education and the other critical pillars of modern society.

Michael Baker is the Chair Emeritus, USDLA as well as an education and healthcare consultant.

• Do you feel comfortable voicing your opinion? While it’s possible to sit in the back of a traditional classroom and avoid active participation, online instructors expect you to contribute meaningful comments to the class discussion on a regular basis. Although this means that it’s a lot tougher to be invisible, many previously passive students discover the value of their own voices in the “anonymity” of an online classroom.

• What are your expectations about online courses? A well-done online course can be fun, stimulating, engaging, and a great learning experience, but rarely is it going to be easier than a classroom – based course. While online instructors expect a high level of participation and lots of hard work from their students, they also tend to reciprocate with high levels of responsiveness and engagement.

These questions should serve as a good place to start when considering pursuing online education. For a more personalized assessment, you may want to check out the eLearners Advisor (www.elearners.com/advisor), which will give you comprehensive results on whether online learning is right for you, including feedback and suggestions about how you can be more successful as an online student, access to resources to help you, and assistance in finding an online degree that meets your needs.

Andrew Gansler is the CEO of eLearners.com., a leading search engine for locating and evaluating online courses and degrees.

academic: adj., of, relating to, or associated with an academy or school, especially of higher learning.

marketing: n., the process or technique of promoting, selling and distributing a product or service.

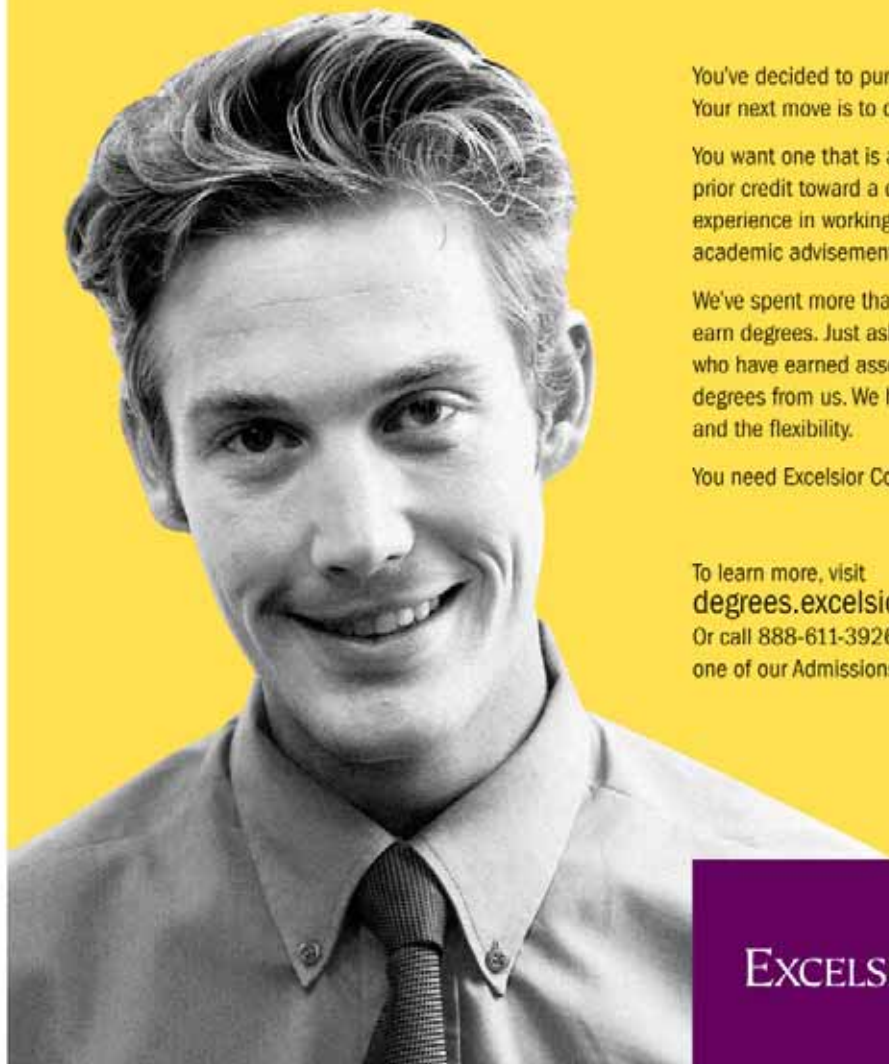


Brown Kelly O’Neill & Partners

Brown Kelly O’Neill & Partners is a trusted advisor and provider of marketing services to leading academic institutions. Our services include brand positioning, recruitment programs, advertising, publishing, raising capital, website development and business development concepts that generate incremental revenue. We are proud to have partnered with the USDLA in the creation of Distance Learning Today.

For more information about how Brown Kelly O’Neill & Partners can help you achieve your off and online objectives, contact John Kelly at 212-367-3902 or jkelly@bkoadv.com.

Choose the college that goes the distance for working adults.



You've decided to pursue your degree online.
Your next move is to choose the right college.

You want one that is accredited and will accept
prior credit toward a degree. You need one that has
experience in working with adults; one that has strong
academic advisement and a variety of support services.

We've spent more than 35 years helping working adults
earn degrees. Just ask any of our 116,000 graduates
who have earned associate, bachelor's and master's
degrees from us. We have the experience, the programs
and the flexibility.

You need Excelsior College. Start to Finish.

To learn more, visit
degrees.excelsior.edu.

Or call 888-611-3926 (and press 2-7) to speak with
one of our Admissions Counselors today.

EXCELSIOR COLLEGE
*Start to Finish*SM