

COMMUNITY COLLEGE TECHNOLOGY UPDATE

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Responding to the new learning styles of a new generation of students, community colleges are embedding the latest technology into their campuses



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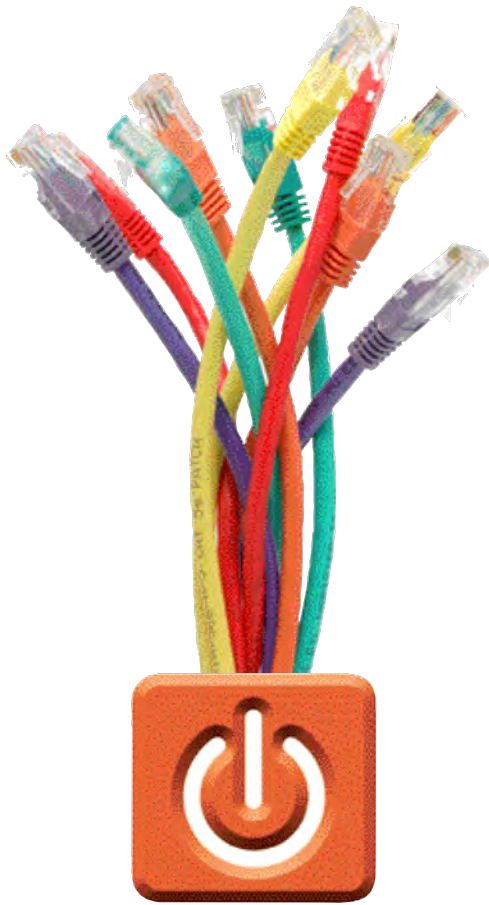
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Two Community Colleges Blend **smart** technologies With Bricks And Mortar

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In today's digital age, there is an increasing emphasis on modern educational facilities that offer students an interactive learning environment and are equipped to support schools' technology-centric curricula. Today's students, for whom social networking sites such as Facebook and MySpace are a necessary part of everyday life, are choosing schools with facilities that offer advanced technology, as well as stimulating and sustainable design elements. By investing in new technology and improved, more sustainable facilities, community colleges are providing the tools their students need to succeed in the classroom, to be prepared for their future careers and to become better stewards of our changing environment.

A recent report from the University of Houston Department of Health and Human Performance found that students in hybrid classes incorporating instructional technology with in-class lectures scored a letter-grade higher on average than their counterparts who took the same class in a more traditional format. Findings like this one are encouraging colleges, especially community colleges that focus on vocational trades, to upgrade their classrooms to ensure that they are well-equipped with advanced technologies.



A Learning-Centered Campus — TIDEWATER COMMUNITY COLLEGE

TCC, located in the South Hampton Roads region of Virginia, is one such school committed to evolving the traditional basic classroom of the past into the high-tech classroom of the future. The college maintains campuses in Chesapeake, Norfolk, Portsmouth and Virginia Beach, and

with more than 39,000 students per year, is the largest provider of higher education and workforce development in Hampton Roads. The school commissioned Burt Hill to design a 70,000-square-foot, LEED-certified, science building on its Portsmouth campus.

The new campus is a learning-centered environment that includes buildings and laboratories for physics, geophysics, astronomy and biology instruction. While all of the classrooms and labs are equipped with a full suite

See *Smart Tech*, page 4, col. 1

Smart Tech, from page 3, col. 5

of audio/visual capabilities, each subject has advanced technology to support the specific curriculum. For example, astronomy students utilize the campus planetarium and its laser projections to create software productions that are displayed on the dome for their entire class to see. There is also an onsite observatory that includes a retractable roof and electronic telescopes that interface with each student's PC.

"It was important that we design the building infrastructure to support the technology that is currently incorporated into the curriculum, as well as make sure the building is equipped to handle future technological advances," said Burt Hill principal and project lead John Knickmeyer.

As more community college students elect to participate in virtual classrooms, remote instruction is an important learning tool for

schools to consider. Distance learning is a central theme at Tidewater, primarily because of the school's multiple campuses. The campuses incorporate real-time remote interaction that includes PC instruction exploration classes, as well as video conferencing interface capabilities. In other words, students can participate in classes from home and with students and faculty from other locations.



Creating Impactful Relationships — DELAWARE COUNTY COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Another example of a community college responding to changing learning styles is the Delaware County Community College in Media, Pa. Burt Hill designed a new Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) Complex on its main campus, which upon completion in December 2009 will consist of a 32,000-square-foot technology building and a 105,000-square-foot science, engineering and math building. The technology building will house facilities for the vocational trades, including carpentry, HVAC/plumbing, electronics, manufacturing and auto labs. The science facility will include chemistry, biology, physics, astronomy and computer and CAD labs, as well as general classrooms and programmatic space.

The school's unique relationship with neighboring businesses and industry leaders is integrated into the curriculum.

"Local companies realize the need for skilled talent and by partnering with us, they can really grow their own," said college President Jerry S. Parker.

Companies work with faculty to develop curriculum and also provide necessary equipment to students. For example, leading aerospace company Boeing actually helps cultivate select curricula and teaching labs at the college. Boeing has also provided about \$250,000 in equipment to instruct students in composite fabrication, sheet metal assembly and non-destructive testing and skills for the manufacture of military helicopters. Other corporate sponsors the school works with include Sunoco, Synthes, Exelon, Southco, Pennsylvania Machine Works, Pepperidge Farm and others.

Delaware County Community College firmly believes in developing an educated workforce.

"Current trends indicate that to preserve our competitive advantage into the 21st century we must act now to optimize our knowledge-based resources, primarily science and technology," Parker said.



write on as they would have used a chalkboard in the past. Through a digital interface, the written material is easily transferred onto student PCs, paper or spreadsheets. Faculty will have "plug and play" capabilities at their teaching stations, which will provide easy access to the Internet, document scanning and projection materials. The buildings also include interactive displays with touch screen capabilities, in order to coincide with the school's curriculum, which often relies on a team-based learning approach.

Additionally, DCCC utilizes advanced simulation techniques in the classroom. These techniques play a prominent role in health sciences classrooms, and feature dummies that can simulate medical functions and diagnostics. The anatomy labs also have computer simulation that allows for three-dimensional images and analysis, and these simulation techniques are employed by the local police academy for student training programs.

Community colleges are also beginning to realize the importance of incorporating

advanced technology into public areas outside the classroom. Both DCCC and TCC place a strong emphasis on advanced technology in the schools' public spaces and have created fully wireless campuses. They also use technology to promote sustainability, and include interactive display screens in common areas that feature information on building energy consumption and the relative carbon footprint.

"Technology and the sustainable message should not just be limited to the classroom," said Knickmeyer. "These are strategies that can be implemented throughout buildings in an ongoing effort to emphasize the significance of this kind of thought leadership."

A Sustainable Message

While advanced technology in the classroom is a critical part of a college education, sustainability is also a recurring theme that helps colleges illustrate valuable teaching points. Leading by example, TCC uses photovoltaic panels connected to the life science building roof that convert sunlight into electricity. DCCC is also being designed for LEED qualification and features a green roof, energy-efficient systems, recycled materials and daylight harvesting. Students are witnessing renewable energy sources firsthand, not just in their textbooks.

Sustainability itself is a growing curriculum as "green collar" jobs grow increasingly popular. Students need workforce training in order to fulfill the newly created sustainability-focused jobs in the manufacturing, material research and construction industries.

Community colleges nationwide are realizing the importance of evolving their campuses and classrooms as they watch the growing demand for technologically proficient graduates. Forming these partnerships with industry leaders through the curriculum, modern technology and classroom tools puts today's community college students at a significant advantage. ▲

Developing "Smart" Classrooms

Ensuring that classrooms are designed as efficiently as possible should be a top priority for colleges eager to appeal to high-tech students and faculty. Both TCC and DCCC incorporate "smart" building technology into their designs. The "smart" buildings and labs incorporate technology into the classroom that is easily accessible to both students and faculty. For instance, the classrooms feature "smart" boards, which are white boards that faculty

INDEX >

To the Advertisers

Datatel	2
Dallas TeleLearning	5
Intelecom	7
Computer Comforts	9
NISOD	11
The Network	13
NEC	15
OmniUpdate	17
The League	20

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Learning Technologies Embodied in Monroe CC's Learning Center

ROCHESTER, N.Y. — Once a typical classroom filled with desks and chairs, a newly renovated room at Monroe Community College's Damon City Campus (DCC) now functions as "a center for active learning" designed to support the many ways students learn today as well as a variety of ways faculty members may want to teach.

Visitors to the center immediately will notice the geometric layout of the room and an array of low- and high-tech educational tools. But the buzz around DCC — and in similar rooms on campuses across the nation — is how the design, furniture and technology work in concert to enable students and instructors to improve the learning process, college administrators say.

"Today's students multitask better than any previous generation and need to be engaged with multiple teaching techniques and technology," said Craig Rand, interim dean of academic services at DCC. "This center



Phil Oettinger, a classroom technology specialist in Instructional Technologies at Monroe Community College in Rochester, N.Y., demonstrates some of the features of the SMART interactive whiteboard for faculty and staff members during an open house at the Damon City Campus. From left are Sandra Chamberlain, senior technical assistant in the DCC Writing Center/Transitional Studies Mastery Lab; Ann Bauer, technical assistant in the DCC Integrated Learning Center; Oettinger; and Teresa Schichler, a part-time instructor in transitional studies at DCC.

will enhance classes and allow for greater innovation, collaboration and a connectedness to the learning process between faculty and students. The

teacher now becomes a facilitator as opposed to a traditional lecturer."

A growing number of post-secondary institutions in the country are re-

examining their learning environments to incorporate multiple teaching methods and enhance students' learning experience. For example, inquiries

from educational institutions about Steelcase's LearnLab™ Environments prototype rose in the past two years,

See Monroe page. 6, col. 1

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Lynn Millwood, Ph.D. - Faculty Content Advisor



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Seminole Community College Prepares for Growth

FRANK KOLAVO

PRESIDENT
COMPUTER COMFORTS, INC.

Given the current economic climate, many community colleges are bracing for dramatic enrollment increases. New students are choosing the affordable community college route and many of those who were in the workforce are going back to school to learn new skills.

Several years ago, Seminole Community College predicted this potential growth and began developing two new sites (Heathrow Center & Altamonte Springs Campus). They also planned for significant renovations on the original Sanford/Lake Mary campus. By 2008, the new facilities were open and ready for business.

A big part of Seminole's planning process included determining how technology would affect classroom design. Most classrooms on all of the campuses are now technology enhanced. Electronic teaching tools (PC, VCR/DVD, projection controls, document cameras, etc.) are now commonplace. The biggest challenge was how to best utilize classroom space. Creating multi-purpose classrooms was the obvious answer. Selecting the proper furniture for maximum flexibility was key to creating a successful learning environment.

For example, today's manual drafting classes are being combined with computer-aided-design (CAD). M.C. Teet of the Facilities Design Department said, "We did not plan to support manual drafting rooms and did not have the floor space for each student to have both a drafting table and a computer table. The



> The computer-aided design/drafting lab.

CAD/Drafting table built by Computer Comforts was the answer. The combination of a tilting drawing table that also supports the computer equipment satisfied our needs in a small footprint." This is one example of how a little innovation can maximize classroom usage.

The testing/assessment labs also required some innovation. "The furniture needed to accommodate either paper testing or computer testing," said Teet. Computer Comforts traditional "looking" carrel supports all modern technology (LCD arm, CPU holder and keyboard arm). "In addition, we needed to take the carrel concept one step further. Our language labs required individual student spaces to support reading materials and computer equipment. Since these labs are instructor-led, we asked Computer Comforts to modify their standard carrel. They replaced

the solid laminated back panel with a see-thru plexi design. The instructors now have good visibility".

The college has also standardized on the patented HideAway LCD table for all computer labs. "We no longer need to have dedicated computer labs which cannot be used for general purpose classrooms", said Teet. "All Computer labs are now multi-purpose rooms.

After doing side-by-side evaluations of a variety of multi-purpose tables (monitor under glass, flipper-top design and pop-up styles), the HideAway table was chosen for its simple design, adjustability and ease of use. No glare on glass or electric lifting motors to worry about."

Thanks to careful planning, Seminole Community College is ready for the future. To learn more about their campuses and facilities, visit www.scc-fl.edu. ▲



> A language lab at SCC.

Monroe, from page 5, col. 5

according to the Michigan-based manufacturer. LearnLab is a research-based environment designed to support lecture, discussion and group work learning modes.

"Our visits last year from higher education to Grand Rapids increased substantially over the year before," said Debra Bailey, director of corporate communications at Steelcase. "This year we have also seen a significant increase over last year."

At DCC, the center for active learning — with strategically placed, mobile furniture — features a SMART

Symposium; two SMART interactive whiteboards; 10 Huddleboards; three video data projectors, including a wireless, wide-format Panasonic; and two document cameras. It also houses four long tables and enough swivel chairs to seat 32 students.

"We're aware that students are coming to MCC with increasingly diverse needs and technology expectations, and we wanted to investigate which applications are best suited for our students," said Raymond Shea, assistant to the president. "We're going to have a new 21st-century campus,

and we don't want to just replicate 20th-century classrooms in the new campus."

The college is planning a new downtown campus, scheduled for completion in 2012.

As the design for the downtown campus moves forward, faculty members are encouraged to use the center for active learning to explore the variety of teaching and learning approaches they may want incorporated in plans for the new campus, Shea said.

The various technologies in the center allow users to control the com-

puter by touch, write in digital ink, create live video, capture digital pictures of information and display different images on each screen.

"We'll have people test various teaching and learning styles that the center supports, learn the technology, practice, teach some classes in here, and then we can assess what works, what pedagogy it works for and what kinds of classes the applications best fit," Shea said.

Project planners said they took great pains to configure the room layout to ensure that the seating allowed

all class members to see the screens, that traffic in the room flowed, and that it encouraged student collaboration.

"In this (new) setting, I could see students doing their group work using those SMART boards instead of writing on a piece of paper that I'm handing out," said Teresa Schichler, a part-time instructor in Transitional Studies at DCC. "I like the fact that anything they do on the SMART boards can then be saved. So again there's no need to print it out."

The center for active learning is open to all MCC faculty members. ▲

A valuable information source!

Higher education news and special reports covering the most pressing and important developments that college presidents, trustees, administrators and faculty members need to follow in today's competitive and ever-changing higher education environment.



Portable Learning System Aids STEM Skills

Casting students in the role of scientists and engaging them in authentic scientific experiments through the use of digital technology can raise the bar for mastery of essential scientific concepts. This will help to prepare them for success in a knowledge-based, global economy that places a premium on science, technology, engineering and math skills (STEM), an executive from PASCO scientific said at the Texas Computer Education Association conference.

"This is the impetus behind PASCO's SPARK Science Learning System, a mobile all-in-one discovery learning environment that puts real-world science exploration into the hands of students and engages them in a way that keeps their focus on science," said Wayne Grant, chief education officer at PASCO. "It was designed from the ground up to allow students to mirror what real scientists do — conceptualize, think, act and communicate using digital technology. Every major sci-

With the SPARK Science Learning System, students can explore the world around them and make their own scientific discoveries. They can ask significant questions, gather data, reflect on data and interpret their findings.

ence today relies on digital technology. It is indispensable if we are going to adequately prepare students to live and work in a world that relies heavily on STEM skills."

SPARK, which stands for sense, perceive, analyze, reflect and know, builds on a science learning process that empowers teachers and energizes students. With the SPARK Science Learning System, students can explore the world around them and make their own scientific discoveries. They can ask significant questions, gather data, reflect on data and interpret their findings.

The SPARK Science Learning System redefines that concept of "easy-to-use" with its large full color display, finger-touch navigation and completely intuitive data collection and analysis capabilities — all in a single device that seamlessly integrates probeware, inquiry-based curriculum and assessment. The lightweight, rugged device enables students to move about the classroom or in the field while conducting experiments, and is designed for viewing data alone or in collaboration with others. It is so simple and intuitive to use that teachers and students can use it once and pick it

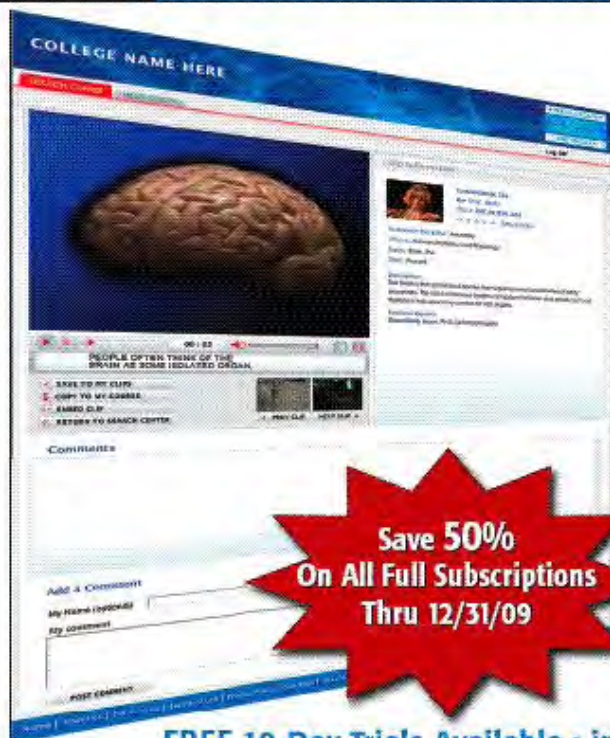
up a week later without missing a beat.

Designed to become the center of a school's discovery-based science learning environment, the SPARK Science Learning System provides both teacher and student embedded support for exploring scientific concepts. The system includes 62 pre-installed SPARKlabs™, standards-based guided inquiry labs in a unique electronic notebook format. These SPARKlabs completely integrate background content, data collection and analysis, and assessment — all within the same environment. Students no longer need to navigate to a separate file for instructions or even refer to paper manuals. Everything they need to support inquiry is right there in context.

PASCO scientific is a leading developer of innovative, technology solutions for hands-on science. PASCO's team includes former and current teachers, educational researchers, engineers. ▲

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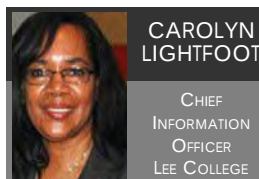
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In an effort to bring lifelong learning to the underserved population of Chambers County, Texas, Lee College and a consortium of other local organizations have established CCCnet, the Chambers County Community network. This broadband wireless network connects 10 mini-computer labs throughout the mostly rural county east of Houston.

Due to a strong partnership among CCCnet consortium members, this network, conceived in 2005 and in full operation since 2007, has been deemed a true success. In 2008, Lee College, a member of ACUTA, the Association for Information Communications Technology Professionals in Higher Education, won the ACUTA Institutional Excellence Award for its CCCnet project.

Established in 1934, Lee College is a comprehensive, public two-year community college serving more than 160,000 residents and enrolling more than 12,000 students each year. The main campus is in Baytown, 25 miles east of Houston.

CCCnet has 10 public access points, most located in community buildings in Chambers County. The locations provide computers, printers, and software. Most locations are community centers in neighborhoods with underserved and/or isolated populations.

CCCnet's users are characterized by their low incomes, lack of high school education, and limited technology skills. Our purpose in establishing CCCnet was to stem the cycle of poverty and high dropout rates. Until CCCnet, there were no GED, ESL or citizenship classes available for adults, although only 48 percent of county adults over 25 have a high school diploma. A survey showed that just 25 percent of the population owned a computer and even fewer had access to the Internet. High-speed Internet was publicly available



in only three county library branches, located in towns with a small percentage of the economically disadvantaged population.

Governing CCCnet is a consortium consisting of Lee College, Chambers County, Chambers Liberty Counties Navigation District, East Chambers Independent School District, and the Trinity Bay Conservation District. A key to success has been the strong partnership formed among these entities, bound by cooperative agreements.

As the project began, the most demanding challenges were building radio towers, wiring 10 buildings, coordinating with governmental agencies, training users and finding a company to maintain the system. The consortium partnered with TeleShare Communications (now Internet America) to maintain and sustain the network.

Purchases of equipment and other property of CCCnet were

arranged through a series of agreements between Lee College and the relevant city, county or school district officials. Partners committed to in-kind donations, including personnel, facilities, utilities, security, existing hardware and software, office space and equipment, etc.

The overall project fits Lee College's mission, with its emphasis on quality instruction and a variety of programs and services — including extension courses, distance education, adult education, continuing education and community service — to prepare students for success in higher education or employment.

Lee College's own network consists of a gigabit backbone with campus buildings connected via single-mode and multimode fiber to the network operations center (NOC). The NOC provides Ethernet connectivity between buildings and its associated switching site. The campus LAN connects routers and PIX firewalls to the

Internet, supporting both Ethernet and MAC O/S.

Using a wireless bridge, networks located in buildings miles from each other were integrated into a single wide area network. The wireless network uses parabolic antennas to extend to a central location, from which additional antennas reach out to rural areas at the furthest ends of the county. Towers were constructed at some locations to ensure line of sight for the antennas. For buildings located close to each other, omni-directional antennas provide wireless connectivity. We use 802.11a standard equipment for its stability and reliability.

The network solution combines Axxcelera Broadband 5 GHz and Western Mux equipment, with both wireless access points (WAPs) and subscriber units purpose-built for WAN deployment. As we developed the wireless network, we employed various tools to monitor traffic flow. For example, using Solar Winds Network

Management software, we had visibility into the performance of applications and the underlying operating systems and servers. We were quickly able to assess the root cause of application performance issues.

One persistent problem involved our main link from Baytown to Mont Belvieu, which had an extremely high collision and error rate and a resulting high incidence of packet loss. We decided the best solution was to replace this link with a Motorola Canopy backhaul and high-end Cisco routers. We later replaced the wireless network configuration with Motorola Canopy 5.7 GHz at several key locations and were able to achieve a 95 percent uptime with the system.

The system, which began with a federal grant, is self-sustaining, which was one of our key goals. We were paying half of the funds for maintenance and improvements, but eventually accumulated enough credit to pay off the expenses involved in improving the network initially. Now all funds allocated for CCCnet go directly to the consortium for continued maintenance, sustainability and scalability.

One of the major objectives included promoting participation in civic life and enhancing the community socially, culturally, and economically. Attesting to our success was the scene at the opening of one of the minilabs. There we saw firsthand the reaction of the various users. As we walked into the library, children of all ages were surfing the Net on networked computers. A librarian was helping a single mother set up an e-mail account for the first time so she could contact potential employers. A young man who had dropped out of school was there, taking a refresher course in preparation for his GED test. Another librarian was showing a grandmother how to download pictures of her grandchildren in New York.

The social benefits of a community network are a powerful reminder of just how important it is to provide education and resources for young people who want to continue living in their communities. It is a chance for everyone in the community to share the opportunities and benefits of the information age. ▲

Arkansas Two-Year Colleges Migrate to New Info Management System

Like higher institutions across the country, Arkansas' two-year colleges are facing shrinking budgets and trying to do more with less. Colleague, Datatel's enterprise information management solution, is being used by community colleges across the state. The goal was to effectively manage data and administrative tasks across a diverse range of departments and campuses to overcome many of today's economic challenges while remaining committed to achieving their institutional visions for student success.

Administrators at Southeast Arkansas College, a two-year technical institution in Pine Bluff, having outgrown its legacy management system, searched for an integrated enterprise information management solution that would run on Oracle and provide a range of online self-service capabilities for students, faculty and staff.

The college's decision to implement Datatel's Colleague set into motion a multi-institution migration

away from their old system. To date, five Arkansas institutions have implemented Colleague – Southeast Arkansas College, Mid-South Community College, Phillips Community College of the University of Arkansas, University of Arkansas Community College at Batesville, and University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff. Datatel worked with the colleges implement the technology, delivering an expansive administrative solution on-time and under budget.

Throughout Southeast Arkansas College's Colleague implementation, Mid-South Community College in West Memphis kept a close eye on the institution's progress and growing relationship with Datatel. Like Southeast Arkansas College, Mid-South Community College began to seriously investigate alternatives to its aging legacy system, especially when maintenance costs escalated without any recognizable improvements to the software.

"When we forecasted five to 10



SEAN O'NEILL
DATATEL, INC.

years out, we realized it simply did not make sense to continue using our old system," said Raul Fletes, director of Data Systems Management at MSCC. "Colleague provides a much greater number of available features that will help the college provide better services to its students."

In addition to seamless integration with existing applications and systems, Fletes cited Colleague's Web-based self-service capabilities, exceptional reporting tools and powerful communications management functionality for Mid-South Community College's decision to migrate to Colleague.

Mid-South came to the conclusion that Colleague could help the college

streamline operations in all departments across campus, providing greater efficiency and cost reductions. They were also impressed by Colleague's non-term driven functionality, which supports Mid-South's course offerings any time of the year.

According to Fletes, Colleague's rules-based structure makes it easier and more convenient for students to handle important administrative tasks such as registering for classes and making tuition payments. In addition to Colleague Student, Mid-South implemented Colleague HR and Colleague Finance. "With Datatel we believe we can make more informed decisions, ultimately making us more competitive," said Fletes.

Six months after Mid-South began implementing Colleague, Phillips Community College of the University of Arkansas also selected Datatel's solution. Of greatest importance to administrators was not only that Colleague could run on their Microsoft SQL Server, but that the system would also

provide a wide range of Web-based self-service capabilities. Today, Colleague's Communications Management solution is largely credited for helping improve the college's interactions and relationships with both traditional and non-traditional students.

The next Arkansas higher education system to become a Datatel client was the University of Arkansas Community College at Batesville. The College selected Colleague for many of the same reasons Mid-South did — the solution's technology platform and the reach of self-service capabilities.

The University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff is the most recent two-year college in the state to implement Colleague.

All five colleges report increased student retention and higher graduation rates, as well as improvements in strategic enrollment management, performance and operational management, teaching and learning, institutional advancement and marketing and strategic planning. ▲

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Instant Messaging at Ivy Tech

Building Bridges, Fostering Connections

Think back to your college days and try to remember specific times when a light bulb went off or a difficult concept really came to life. I bet many of these instances occurred outside the lecture hall – maybe in your dorm studying with friends, in the library or the student union. While traditional instruction is an essential part of one's college education, it is often the informal, spontaneous interactions with peers and professors that create the "A-HA!" moments of learning.

At Ivy Tech Community College, we regularly look for ways to foster such moments across our community. This can be a challenge for a college serving more than 120,000 students, many of whom are nontraditional learners, across 23 campuses and nearly 100 educational sites.

As we began researching ways to enhance distance learning at Ivy Tech, we came across a single solution – an enterprise instant messaging platform – that could facilitate greater collaboration for remote learners as well as those who attend classes on campus.

Embracing Instant Messaging as Teaching Tool

Ivy Tech's distance learning programs are built on a solid foundation, offering 350 courses for more than 18,000 students, using the Blackboard Course Management System. We knew instant messaging was ubiquitous among students and decided to put its use to the test in the institution. After our initial round of research, it became clear that the standard instant messaging tools, many of which were



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free, lacked a number of important features necessary in an academic setting. In the spring of 2007, we added Wimba's instant messaging service – Pronto – to enhance personal attention and instruction. It provided an excellent instant messaging tool and it was available at no charge for the basic service.

In 2008, Ivy Tech did an extensive update of its strategic plan to address college-wide strategies. We knew any college-wide technology we selected would have to directly address these strategies. By facilitating virtual campus services, office hours, library services and tutoring sessions, the new instant messaging service supported several of these – promoting educational attainment, workforce development and lifelong learning. As we

delved deeper into the platform we recognized that it would seamlessly integrate with our course management system and decided to launch a pilot in spring 2007. A few months into it we had about 7,000 students and faculty using the platform.

Having the platform directly inside our CMS resulted in rapid adoption. Students and faculty had immediate access to their classmates and peers since contact information is automatically generated and added to buddy lists upon registering for courses. No manual entry of contacts is needed. In addition, faculty teaching a variety of courses each semester can see their students in Pronto, organized by course. They no longer had to guess, "whose Yahoo/AOL/MSN username is

that?"

With a built-in tab for campus departments, the instant messaging platform afforded students greater access to various services. For example, students, faculty and staff could participate in live chats with the help desk as well as instructional technology and distance education staff.

Improving Student Access To Faculty

According to the 2008 Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE) students perform better at colleges that are committed to their success and cultivate positive working and social relationships with faculty and other students on campus. Students also benefit from services targeted to assist them with academic advising/planning, academic skill development, and other areas that may affect learning and retention. Yet, while students attribute relatively high importance to academic advising and career counseling, up to 51 percent of rarely or never take advantage of those services.

For most community college students, juggling jobs and families, it is difficult to spend extra time on campus outside of class. For distance learners, attending live office hours means making the trip to campus to speak with the professor. Ivy Tech sees instant messaging as a way to help bridge the gap between student engagement with the institution and the busy lives they all lead. As my colleague Renee Rule, assistant professor of English and coordinator of distance education for the School of Liberal Arts, once commented: "Since most of our students

are working full-time and attending classes, it is inconvenient for them to meet during regular office hours. However, with Pronto, students have immediate access to faculty."

Another advantage of online office hours is access to queued and group chats. Through the queued chat feature, faculty can set up a virtual line for students to wait for private one-on-one meetings. When the instructor is done helping one student, he or she exits the chat and the next student is automatically pulled in. This feature provides students a secure, online environment they can access off campus that is structured in the same way as on-campus office hours.

Through group chat students can engage in virtual study sessions. It is also a means for faculty to hold an online conversation with several students who may have the same questions. For example, Bonnie Willy, associate professor of computer information systems and computer information technology, often opens up a group chat session for her students to talk among themselves.

"I just open the chat and that's where my role ends," she says. "I sometimes have students chatting with each other who aren't even in the same class, and I think that's really powerful."

Results of a Successful Implementation

Ivy Tech officially rolled out the new version of the program in the fall 2008 semester. Today 1,224 faculty members and more than 15,000 students use Pronto at Ivy Tech. Some faculty members say it has become their primary means of interacting with students outside the classroom. Kimberly Hilton, assistant professor of academic advancement-English, says it has helped create personal bonds with students she might otherwise not have a chance to interact with. She also uses it frequently to communicate with other instructors and staff members and says it is much faster than email or voice mail.

As the use of instant messaging continues to flourish across our college, we can attest to the power of this technology to foster spontaneous, informal connections. After all, teaching and learning doesn't stop when a student leaves the classroom – and as an institution of higher education we have an obligation to ensure that our top priority for technology investments is to support that. Our tagline is "Changing Lives" and we feel we are doing that even by using our ever changing technology to impact the lives of our students. ▲

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Ronald Berk, Professor Emeritus, The Johns Hopkins University (MD)

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Creating and Implementing a Multimedia Electronic Textbook

Leif Swanson, English Instructor; and Howard Major, Dean, Arts and Humanities, Laramie County Community College (WY)

Virtual World Learning

James Satterfield, Assistant Professor, Virtual World Learning; Elaine Hiatt, Clinical Professor; Cheryl Warner, Assistant Professor; and Stephen Bromak, Associate Professor, Clemson University (SC)

Preparing Students for the 21st Century

Michèle de los Santos, Regional Sales Manager, Wimba (NY)

Overcoming the Tyranny of Distance with Synchronous Teaching over an IP

Judy Lowe, Assistant Vice President; and Raymond Bertani, Director, Center for Distributed Education, Chattanooga State Technical and Community College (TN)

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Jesus Diaz, Sr., Multimedia Specialist; and Ron Wojnar, Professor, Northwest Vista College (TX)

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Mary Jane Ormen, Faculty, English, Reading, ESL, Glendale Community College (AZ)

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John Gilbert, 3D Holographic Lab Coordinator; and Shirley Gilbert, Special Assistant to the President, El Paso Community College (TX)

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Les Meyer, Assistant Professor; and Jessica Armstrong, OAR Director, Ivy Tech Community College (IN)

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Web 2.0: Tools for Collaboration or Collusion?

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Deciding Mobile Internet Too Important To Ignore, Victor Valley College Provides Seamless Browsing Experience

Today's current and prospective community college students are browsing the web more and more on their smart phones. A report by Nielsen Mobile found that as of mid-2008, there were 40 million mobile Internet users, of which nearly 25 percent were 13-24 year olds). With such growth in mobile Internet browsing, Victor Valley College quickly moved to ensure our Web site was able to service students, faculty and staff looking to access information from their mobile devices. We understand the college Webs site is an important "first impression" for any community college, whether viewed from a desktop, laptop or mobile device. Because of this, the mobile Internet can no longer be ignored.

Making the Most of CSS

Today's college webmasters have solid options for ensuring consistent and excellent website presentations across varying platforms, including mobile devices. One important tool is Cascading Style Sheets (CSS). CSS is a style sheet programming language used to describe the style of the content within a document and how it is presented. It enables a single CSS document to define the style of multiple documents without having to define them in each individual document each time one is created or changed.

There are three key benefits to implementing CSS. First, the separation of content from design allows colors, fonts, layout, and other aspects of document presentation to be defined and enforced across several web pages or entire websites with a single CSS document. Second, it improves compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act for accessibility, which helps better serve disabled users. Third, it improves overall website performance. Modern mobile devices interpret CSS in a variety of ways, from text-only to the near full-desktop experience, so it is critical to create style sheets that work well with an array of platforms.

Implementing CSS at Victor Valley

When I first started at Victor Valley College in March 2006, CSS wasn't being used at all. Over the course of two months that fall, we made two significant moves toward addressing the mobile Internet.

We first purchased Omni-Update's OU Campus, a web content management software (CMS) solution that helped us better manage our content. OU Campus was developed specifically for higher education institutions, so we knew our needs would be met. It allows us to empower content experts across campus to update and manage content directly through the website, complete with accessibility controls, publishing approval processes, and many more powerful editing and management tools. A month after implementing OU Campus, I initiated a full website



JUSTIN GATEWOOD

WEBMASTER
VICTOR VALLEY
COLLEGE

redesign project and incorporated a new layout using CSS. The web-based, color-coded source code editor in OU Campus allowed me to access the website's CSS files from anywhere, on any operating system, using any browser.

Rendering CSS for Mobile Devices

To present the same content from the Victor Valley College website in yet another format (screen, print and handheld), CSS once again came into play. The idea was to extend the usability and accessibility of our website without having to do a huge amount of work. A CSS file has particular benefits in providing additional compliance and support for assistive technologies such as screen readers.

It is important to remember the following when rendering CSS specifically for mobile devices: First, structure your content according to standards

which will ensure that your information is accessible and compliant with ADA requirements and recommendations. Second, apply CSS and CSS profiles to present your content based on the agent requesting it. Once that is done, you can then begin adding "behaviors" (Java script, AJAX elements, etc.) to enhance your website for the browsers that support that functionality.

This method—in this order—will provide the best practices needed to ensure as much conformance, adaptability and compatibility with as many different environments as possible. It also breaks down the content and structure into a format that will be easily read by assistive technology with a minimum number of errors or confusion in the output it generates. The foundation of your website should be semantically coded, standards compliant and include structured content. The "structure" is your HTML (without any inline styling) and the "content" consists of your text, images, headings, XML output or output from various database sources. Once this foundation has been put together, then you can add presentation, which is your CSS.

As we did with the Victor Valley College website, adding images to your presentation within the CSS helps ensure the page/website will also meet



OU Campus, the CMS from OmniUpdate, features a web-based and color-coded source code editor allowing 24/7 remote access for making changes from anywhere.

accessibility compliance through proper usability for screen readers and other assistive technologies. If you want to then enhance your finished presentation with "behaviors," make sure the addition of these behaviors does not take your website visitors away from the core message of your website. Also, make sure that your behaviors will work if Java script is turned off. Otherwise, your website's accessibility features for users of assis-

sive technologies may not function properly.

By remaining as standards compliant as possible and by using standards-compliant XHTML and CSS, most web-capable handheld devices will be able to easily browse your website with minimal problems. Unfortunately, because the methods of rendering websites vary so greatly depending on the particular mobile

See Victor Valley, page 13, col. 1



Ensuring compliance to standards like CSS and those from the W3C maximizes mobile device compatibility of the Victor Valley College website.

Victor Valley, *from page 12, col. 5*

device, it is unrealistic to create a single CSS file that will work in all mobile situations. Sometimes you may still encounter small browsing problems. However, ensuring your website conforms to standards, like those from the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C), helps ensure the vast majority of mobile devices will browse your website trouble free.

Is a Whole New Mobile-Internet-Specific Website Needed?

The idea behind conforming to W3C and CSS standards is to use best practice techniques that, when implemented, will allow website owners and administrators the ability to fully support web standards for web-enabled handheld devices. Basically, maximum results with minimum work. To maximize the types of devices supported, create CSS profiles that are developed to target a specific browser type. They are rendered based on user agent queries/browser sniffing. Sniffing is when you configure your server to detect the browser type to ensure the appropriate CSS is applied for that device.

The server loads the specific applicable elements of your content so that the amount of content rendered and the way in which it is styled is appropriate to the device/browser-type. This reduces the "weight" of what is delivered to the mobile device, and mobile users will appreciate the attention you've paid to improving the performance of their experience with your website.

It is critical to repurpose the content based on the agent that is requesting it. If you are able to set this up from the beginning, and do so according to accepted web standards and semantics, then a mobile domain is not necessary. To the end user, your repurposed content will be rendered in their mobile device as if you have an entirely different website just for them. There are a couple of ways to accomplish this. You can detect the mobile device user agent (server-side) and then deliver device-specific content or, through process of elimination, you may be able to detect whether the HTTP request is coming from a major operating system (Windows, Mac, Linux, Solaris, or BSD). If an OS is not requesting the content, then you can probably safely opt to deliver mobile-

enhanced content. Any of these methods will work, but it's up to you to determine which method best suits your situation.

Final Tips and Tools of the Trade

At Victor Valley College, we use OmniUpdate's OU Campus as the primary method for web content management, including for editing and submissions and to allow us to involve content experts in the workflow. In addition to a web CMS, you'll need Notepad++ (open source) for your CSS development (or for any development) and we use Dreamweaver CS3/CS4 to piece together the HTML.

There is a wealth of information about all technical and practical applications of CSS available on the Internet. If you are looking for help with developing your CSS files, Eric Meyer's CSS Sculptor (a plug-in for Dreamweaver) is recommended. This product is an excellent starting point for those who are unfamiliar with setting up a standards-compliant CSS layout. You can use this product to visually design and create a working CSS layout for your website. Also,

search the web and do some reading (read the "A List Apart" website visit CSS Zen Garden online, read the W3C's CSS information on their website, etc.). And above all, practice, practice, practice and do not be intimidated. To get more detailed information about developing for mobile devices, I recommend visiting the W3C's Mobile Web Initiative at <http://www.w3.org/mobile/> (this site also includes their "MobileOK" validator that can aid you in putting together your mobile content).

Finally, I want to re-emphasize that from the onset, you should set up your structured content to be semantically correct and standards compliant. This should be followed by the set up of your CSS, according to accepted web standards. After these two steps, move on to user agent/browser sniffing so that you only deliver the content necessary (or appropriate) for the particular suited environment. The mobile Internet is too important to ignore. You must ensure your college's website can be accessed on the mobile web-capable devices that are quickly becoming the method of choice for accessing browser-based content. ▲

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Minnesota Colleges Turn to Online Options To Weather Recession

With the ailing economy affecting so many people in the country, it's not surprising that many academic institutions are struggling for ways to continue to provide students with the best education and services while also keeping overhead at a minimum. The Minnesota Online Support Center, a department within Minnesota State Colleges and Universities, is no exception to the rule. Through careful planning and investment in the right technology, support services for students and faculty are becoming more efficient and effective.

Minnesota State Colleges and Universities are the largest single provider of higher education in the state of Minnesota, with 32 state universities and community and technical colleges and a total of 250,000 students. Minnesota Online coordinates a Web-based system to bring together online programs and courses. To continue supporting students, Minnesota Online made a commitment to invest in efficient technology to keep the online system affordable and make the most of information technology staff time, especially in a recessionary climate.

As the online education market continues to grow in popularity — analysts estimate that it will grow to \$52.6 billion by 2010 — it is becoming essential for institutions that provide online programs to make the most of every recruiting lead and to differentiate themselves from the competition. In the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system, 9.2 percent of registered credits for the 2007-08 year were predominantly online.

Thus, the Minnesota Online Support Center is challenged with servicing an increasing number of online students. It has used two supporting technology initiatives that lend themselves to quality of service and efficiency: knowledge-based technology and self-service options.

Knowledge-based technology: Using the RightNow Technologies suite of tools, the center is able to provide information about programs and courses from all participating institutions through Minnesota Online. The technology ensures that all participants have access to consistent information regardless of the touchpoint. The technology can be easily accessed via a variety of intuitive

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DIRECTOR OF ONLINE
ACADEMIC SERVICES
MINNESOTA ONLINE

methods — topical browsing, keyword search, and a "Top 20" list of the most popular subjects.

Self-service options: The knowledge base is particularly valuable as a self-service resource and is accessible 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Links to the knowledge base are placed at the Minnesota Online web site and participating colleges and universities. Students are provided with immediate answers to typical questions while freeing staff to provide outreach services to prospects. The support center gives fast answers to questions about programs, courses, registration, fees and other issues. It also captures information about potential students when they ask questions, so they can be included in varying communication campaigns with the concept of converting prospective students to enrolled students.

SaaS for Schools

Although most academic institutions are aware of Software as a Service (SaaS) as an alternative deployment option along with legacy technology systems, many colleges and universities may not be taking full advantage of all that SaaS has to offer. As budgets shrink and information technology become scarce, SaaS is an important tool for taking the IT burden off staff members and the institution's checkbook.

One benefit Minnesota State Colleges and Universities has realized is offering institutions the ability to pilot certain SaaS products to make sure that the technology does exactly what they need it to do. The majority of SaaS or on-demand software providers will agree to a pilot program before signing the full contract, and why not? Vendors should want to demonstrate that product capabilities work as promised. If the vendors are reluctant to do this, it may be worth exploring other options.

Century College, one of Minnesota State Colleges and

Universities two-year colleges, is piloting RightNow Technologies' CRM marketing solution as a student recruitment tool. Century College has been using RightNow's customer support and dynamic knowledge base solution for several years, and like many of the colleges in the Minnesota system, their awareness of RightNow came through word of mouth and recommendations from other schools in the system.

This pilot strategy has paved the way for RightNow to assist more than two dozen schools in the system, each with a different set of objectives. These objectives range from improved recruitment and enhanced student services to innovative support for local business communities, library system support, staff services and IT help desk.

Tough economic times are forcing colleges and universities to support existing students, while driving down institutional costs. Establishing a knowledge foundation that provides information 24/7 via a cost efficient SaaS delivery model is the first step toward achieving these key competitive differentiators. ▲

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College Fundraising Calls for New Thinking, Technological Tools

Americans continue to tighten their belts amid the economic turmoil, and our community colleges find themselves in a paradox. Enrollments are increasing while public funding has tightened. Even with Pell Grant increases and the stimulus packages coming from Washington, colleges have been stung and presidents are seeking funding by any other means to gain footing against future ups and downs. Increasingly, fundraising in the community and capitalizing on close relationships with long-forgotten alumni has assumed center stage. The tactical job of donor identification and cultivation, followed by solicitation and stewardship, are critical to more colleges' financial positions.

According to a *Wall Street Journal* article, alumni of large universities have started redirecting their support to smaller colleges in their communities. Donors feel their gifts have direct and visible impact — "more bang for the buck" — at smaller private and two-year colleges than they do at larger schools having larger endowments. Given the unstable nature of the current economy and these revised giving trends, community colleges should be thinking about the people and technology they will need to communicate with busy alumni and manage the sensitive nature of gifts, volunteering and other manners of support.

Whether the purpose is to raise scholarship



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money, hire faculty, or undertake campus improvement and expansion, fundraising software becomes a kind of central nervous system for many presidents. The right technology becomes the hub of data and activity necessary to cultivate relationships, pinpoint communications to the right people at the right time and to manage and measure progress and results.

The right software also can take enormous pressure off of presidents, development directors and other supporting professionals by making their outreach efforts highly targeted, systematic and reliable. The best systems today include advanced features for mobile access to donor profiles and ties with leading social networking tools like Facebook and LinkedIn. Embracing those kinds of tools is not about the college trying to appear to be cool. It is about the necessity of reaching out to the places that people frequent and prefer to interact.

Some key points that make relationship management and fundraising relevant to today's community colleges include:

- **Control of your rewards and reputation.**

Fundraising software provides instantaneous access to large groups of your constituents. The right tools provide controls on the "end user" level, so that a donor capable of a million dollar gift is not also being spammed with requests for \$25 donations. Today's technology can not only control communications, but show the breakdown of funds, including how the distributed funds are being used. This is particularly important to today's donors, who like to see their gifts go directly to their particular cause of choice.

- **Improved communications to your constituents.**

No one enjoys board meetings where even those closest to the college don't seem to be on the same page. Direct mail is one of the most common fund generation methods used, and fundraising software streamlines the entire donor communications process. But with little human effort, newsletters and other electronic communications become

timelier, more personalized and more effective. For example, automated letter and email generation can pinpoint certain types of supporters most interested in the college's desire to offer more scholarships. The right software lets you instantly create mailing groups of those known to be interested in the topic. The average user can help the present communicate frequently and specifically to those most desiring the latest and greatest input.

- **Maximum return from special events.**

The best fundraising software has functionality devoted to event planning, budgeting and reporting. Whether it's a golf tournament, an evening gala or an alumni dinner, powerful new tools help you manage every detail — down to dietary preferences. Events where class years or departments sometimes become fundraising rivals within the college's own administration now can be more graciously accommodated, while also tracking each year's or department's contributions relative to expense.

- **Efficient management of donor information.**

Collecting and managing research about donors and other important constituents is easy with software that offers more sophisticated prospect research tools. At many colleges, employees go into the field and visit with donors and prospects. Effective fundraising software will help keep track of many of the communications and interactions, including built-in triggers to remind you to follow up on details important to that individual donor.

- **Seamless integration with accounting departments.**

Accounting departments will find fundraising software especially helpful, since many programs offer integration with a school's general ledger and other accounting functions including accounts payable, accounts receivable, bank reconciliation, payroll and purchase order creation which alerts a user if they exceed the credit limit. In addition, data can be exported to worksheets and users can multitask without exiting a single function.

Software packages certainly do come at an expense. But relative to the benefits — like closed-loop communications, well-engaged donors, and financial accountability for gifts and expenses — few would disagree with exploring the possibilities.

Given that experts report declines of charitable giving of less than 4 percent even during the 1980's recession and post-9/11, now might be the right time to invest in the relationships that matter most to the college. ▲

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Ore. Teacher's Invention Has Life Of Its Own

ELMIRA, Ore. (AP) — Elmira High School science teacher Jeff Hellman is beginning to wonder if he's bitten off more than he can chew.

In 2006 he began working to toss his old-style planning book and go digital. It has become a second career for the teacher at the school west of Eugene.

The program, Planbook by Hellmansoft, is selling by the thousands worldwide.

"To be honest, I didn't think it would get this far," said Hellman, a tall, unassuming 28-year-old in his fifth year of teaching. "I had never written a software program before. But about a month into it, it was like, maybe this is going to work."

He loved developing the program, he said, but also saw the potential. So far he says he has netted sales in the mid-to-high five figures.

His first version was for Macintosh users like himself, but he developed one last year for PCs.

Last August and September were off-scale busy, he said, with four hours sleep some nights.

He has done no advertising, but posted information and a link to his site at VersionTracker.com, a Web site that tracks software releases.

That was all it took. The program has been downloaded at least 50,000 times, Hellman said though many of those are existing customers checking out upgraded versions.

Downloading a trial version is free; the full program costs \$30 and there are customers around the globe.

An English language school in Nigeria recently had trouble downloading Planbook, Hellman said, because of numerous Nigerian e-mail scams.

"I see the benefits of paper," said Hellman, who initially kept track of daily lesson plans in a bound, paper planner. "But it just seemed like a computer could really help."

The son of a tech-savvy Hillsboro High School science teacher, Hellman grew up messing around with computers, creating his own Web site as a freshman in 1994, several years ahead of the trend.

But he took only one programming class as an undergraduate at Carleton College in Minnesota, and it was more theoretical than practical.

Planbook's simplicity is one of its main draws.

The calendar format will look familiar to anyone who has used a paper planner. Users can enter their schedules, from a simple six-period school day to two-week rotations, and easily make adjustments as necessary, he said.

Users can also attach files, such as worksheets or readings, export content to the Web to allow students home access and search for previous lessons.

"It gives me the opportunity to do the same thing I was doing before, only electronically," said

Elmira math teacher Joel McCowan, one of four Elmira teachers who have started using Planbook. Hellman gave the Fern Ridge School District free rights.

"If you are a teacher, you MUST MUST MUST start using this program. It will completely change how you com-

municate with your parents/students," said a Missouri middle school teacher.

"I think successful small businesses are responsive to customers," said Hellman, who estimates he spends a couple of hours a night responding to e-mails and troubleshooting.

"But I'm probably too connected

to the Internet."

Though he doesn't believe Planbook takes a toll on his teaching, Hellman said it takes one on his free time, and is considering hiring help.

He wouldn't rule out leaving teaching to focus on Planbook full-time, but Hellman said he's happy where he is. ▲

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Professional Development Network

Saves Community Colleges Time, Money

Even before the weakened U.S. economy began tightening budgets, higher education grappled with how to provide high-quality professional development for their faculty and staff in an efficient and cost-effective manner. Faculty and staff are extremely busy, with less and less time to spend attending conferences or special training and development events at their institutions. Adding to this, the cost of travel to those conferences has skyrocketed, while educational travel budgets have shriveled. Cognizant of this issue, the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board decided to re-think how it spent much of its Perkins Leadership funds, resulting in a groundbreaking statewide project for career and technical educators: the Texas Network for Teaching Excellence in Career and Technical Education (The Network).

Established with a Perkins Leadership grant in 2007, The Network (www.txpod.org) is now in its second year. This free online resource is a central location for online professional development opportunities created by both community colleges and private providers. With more than 300 on-demand, interactive modules, an event calendar, a module completion portfolio system, and live webinars, The Network answers the question of faculty and staff when they ask, "How can I find solid, affordable professional development training?" The Network eliminates the need to search endlessly, contacting colleagues and



**TERRY STEWART
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AUSTIN COMMUNITY
COLLEGE

researching online for potential professional development opportunities. A wealth of free, high-quality professional development is now on one easy-to-use site.

According to Richard Moore, executive director of the Texas Community College Teachers Association, there are not enough hours in the day or enough travel dollars available for career and technical educators to stay abreast of the rapidly changing developments in their fields.

"We wanted to provide a free resource online, always accessible to educators around the state and across the country to get the resources they need for the classroom," says Moore.

Easy-to-use search tools allow users to search through topics on teaching strategies, technology, discipline specific content, teaching and learning styles, and training that meets institutional mandates. Timely and diverse topics

keep faculty at the forefront on important issues and emerging technology. On April 10, users can attend a webinar on Renewable Energy Program Development by Ed Ardizoni of Austin Community College. This webinar address the growing need by city governments who are looking to their community colleges to help meet renewable energy requirements.

The Network is supported on the Adobe Connect platform. With powerful audio and video capabilities, the site creates a high interconnectivity for a meaningful learning experience. On-demand learning also respects faculty's time. Users control the learning modules and accompanying tests, fitting professional development around their schedules and pace. They can access resources for a one-time viewing or incorporate them into a portfolio and store completed credits that can be presented to their division chairs or deans, or as part of faculty evaluations.

The site also addresses the administrative needs of faculty as well. Professional development specialists or department chairs can set up unique curriculum with a record of completion that is documented for each individual. The Network also offers many ways to share resources and ideas with professional development peers across the state. From simply searching for a new program to creating online meetings to discuss new learning strategies, The Network offers easy-to-use technology for every need.

"I was extremely excited about the adminis-

trative device to be able to go in and select a series of training and then be able to monitor and see the participants actually complete the curriculum that I laid out," says Hilton LaSalle, program director for the Center for Teaching & Distance Learning at Lone Star College System. "I was also impressed with how simple it was to use the quiz and survey components within each module."

The builders of the Network are composed of a unique partnership. Austin Community College District is the fiscal agent for the project. Of special interest are the partners:

Texas Community College Teachers Association, a one-of-a-kind faculty support association with 6,000 members, contributes much to the project: a strong background with professional development, space for the project staff, and a solid reputation with faculty and administrators across the state.

Four regional partner colleges, all known for their expertise in professional development: Dallas County Community College District, Lone Star College System, Del Mar College, Midland Community College.

The Texas Leadership Alliance and the Northeast Texas Network.

The Virtual College of Texas, a distance learning collaborative of Texas community and technical colleges.

To begin using this free resource for your professional development needs, visit www.txpod.org. ▲

Software Ensures

For Seminole Community College Students

In the face of burgeoning enrollment, most colleges have tapped grant funding and tax dollars to modernize and keep computer labs, hardware and software current. One particular recent challenge is how to ensure the colleges' broadband Internet access is being properly utilized for research and communication purposes.

Most IT administrators at community colleges have enacted mandatory lab usage policies with fundamental rules forbidding downloading and installing software, viewing non-class related materials on the Internet and the use of Instant Messaging applications. However, if a problem does manifest itself, one solution has been to "reimage" the computer. In this process, an IT administrator wipes a computer "clean" and reinstalls all the software,

taking it back to a "Day 1" state rather than a "last known good" state. However, reimaging can cost students and staff valuable work time and is an arduous process for IT administrators.

Seminole Community College (SCC) is utilizing a new process offered by Tampa-based Persysent Technologies.

"We have looked for a solution that could allow us to quickly repair problems and keep our computers work-ready," said Dick Hamann, vice president of information technology and chief information officer at SCC, a four-campus college serving the northern Orlando suburb of Seminole County, Fla. There are about 4,500 workstations in SCC's computer labs that are often open 14 hours per day. According to Hamann, this has presented SCC with a challenge of find-

JOE LOUGHRY

PRESIDENT AND CEO
PERSYSTENT TECHNOLOGIES

ing software that can both prevent the computers from falling prey to viruses, malware or other external threats, and to quickly restore systems when problems occur.

"We need to be in the business of supporting people, in addition to supporting the technology," said Hamann, who's worked in information technology for more than 20 years.

Most of the problems SCC sees in the labs are user-generated and often unintentional (such as corrupted files, unauthorized software), which are compounded by steady

usage from multiple users. Persysent Technologies' software is an automated PC recovery product that can – in less than 30 seconds – restore application and O/S files that are corrupted, changed or missing. "Through a simple reboot of a machine, whether done by us or the students, the software repairs the O/S, registry, applications and settings regardless of the type of system failure or problem," said Hamann.

Hamann believes the use of a tool like Persysent's software is paying off for the college. SCC no longer struggles with viruses such as the NIMDA worm, which in 2001 wreaked havoc on numerous organizations throughout the world. Now, SCC's IT administrators simply power down machines to return to a desirable pre-authorized work-ready state. In addition, the new software

enables SCC to save time during large-scale rollouts – getting all the computers in a lab ready for use in one hour. By giving students a way to "rebuild" the computer automatically via a simple restart of the machine, Hamann says that SCC has also cut down on help desk calls.

With no end in sight to increased enrollment that stresses technology resources at community colleges, Hamann has advice for his IT colleagues.

"Be on the lookout for innovative solutions to increased challenges to a college's technological infrastructure. It's important that we remain one step ahead," said Hamann. "Most important of all, our students are happy because they can rely on technology that works, and technology that is always there for them." ▲

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