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## *Creating a Virtual Learning Community*

March 2000 - Volume 1, Issue 3

### *10 Reasons to Try Online Learning*

You teach a good class. Students learn the material well. Why should you add an online section to your load? Here's what 10 of the state's online learning leaders said:

1. Online instructors and students gain experience and skills that will make them marketable in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.
2. Online learning is active. Students analyze and evaluate independently while reading, writing, and discussing heavily. Because of this, many students find online learning more fun.
3. Online learning is flexible. Based on their preferences and needs, instructors and students can work on a course at 2 p.m. or 2 a.m., at home or at school.
4. Involvement in online teaching after years of offering the same courses is rejuvenating. In addition to learning new technologies, instructors make discoveries about how to teach that they bring back to the traditional classroom.
5. More students participate online because they are less self-conscious and less subject to the time pressure that can inhibit classroom discussions. Instructors, in turn, get enhanced one-on-one contact with students.
6. Web site integration allows a larger variety of content and resulting opportunities for individualized learning. The whole world becomes the classroom.
7. Instructors have opportunities for extra income as online companies look for experienced teachers.
8. Through sharing with another college, an online teacher can offer courses that would never have sufficient enrollment if just one college was involved.
9. Online instructors can look forward to a retirement almost anywhere in the world where they can still teach their favorite class once a year.

10. Online learning can work on a variety of levels. The Internet can deliver an en-tire course, enhance communication in a face-to-face course, or provide a sto-rage place for basic course information.

#### **Reasons submitted by:**

Sam Zahran, Fayetteville Tech CC  
Julia May, South Piedmont CC  
Celia Hurley, Randolph CC  
Linda Earnhardt, Rowan-Cabarrus CC  
Sylvia Proctor, Johnston CC  
Linda Lutz, Catawba Valley CC  
Elaine Seeman, Pitt CC  
Dennis Keough, Southwestern CC  
Patrick Keough, Carteret CC  
Jeanne Whisnant, Mayland CC

### *Blackboard CourseInfo Available at Reduced Price*

The Virtual Learning Community has negotiated a reduced price for colleges to buy Blackboard CourseInfo. The software usually costs \$5000, but until March 31, colleges can buy a year's license for \$3500. After that date, the cost will be \$4000. Colleges willing to sign a commitment can lock in their price for three years.

CourseInfo is the official software for Community classes. Colleges that buy now will have immediate access to versatile, easy-to-use software for development and delivery of online classes. For more information about the software, see our last newsletter or the Blackboard company site, <http://company.blackboard.com>.

To support CourseInfo, a UNIX (Linux or Solaris) or NT server with 512 MB of RAM and 4GB of hard drive space is needed. Users access the software through a web browser (4.0 versions are needed to access all the features). Purchasing colleges should factor administration time into their decision. Administrative training will be arranged for purchasing colleges.

Now is the time to purchase if your college can support the software. Outsourced hosting possibilities for colleges that cannot or do not want to host the software locally will also be announced soon.

The price covers a 1-year license for unlimited course development by instructors and delivery to students at your college. It includes technical support and any upgrades released in that year. To buy, notify [Neil Hollands](#). He can provide more information or connect you with the sales representative.

### *Course Development Underway*

On January 21, 90 representatives from all of North Carolina's community colleges braved the snow to meet at Wake Tech to begin development of the Virtual Learning Community's first online courses. After five hours of learning and sharing, participants left excited to begin collaboration online.

After welcomes from Dr. Neill McLeod of Wake Tech CC, President Desna Wallin of Forsyth Tech CC, Jim Barber of LearnNC, and Dr. Janyth Fredrickson of the System Office, the developers learned about the course design template and the software involved, CourseInfo. Teams then selected leaders and began course design.

Will Johnson of Montgomery CC noted "The workshop was one of the best I have attended in over 15 years in distance learning. It was well organized. The materials, content and process were set up with an action-oriented outcome in mind."

Development continues in online forums, with completion scheduled for May. When done, courses will be available for any instructor to use at a North Carolina community college. Materials will be complete and exemplary, but instructors can modify any course in CourseInfo before offering it.

## *Course Development Teams*

### **ART 111**

#### Co-Leaders

Jean Cauthen - Caldwell CC & TI

Ashley Lathe - Stanly CC

Kelly Adams - Pitt CC

Tamara Grayson - Wilkes CC

Jean Penland - Haywood CC

Cliff Stuckey - Sandhills CC

Martha Williams - Craven CC

Continuing Education:

Rob Everett - Guilford Tech CC

Facilitator:

Elaine Seeman - Pitt CC

### **BUS 110**

#### Leader

Joe Brum - Fayetteville Tech CC

KC Irwin - Catawba Valley CC

Gordon Knight - Mitchell CC

Daffie Matthews - Montgomery CC

Al Ward - Pamlico CC

Carolyn Watson - Robeson CC

Willie Wooldridge - Rockingham CC

Continuing Education:

Tim Rhodes - Lenoir CC

Facilitator:

Savannah Clay - Central Piedmont CC

### **CIS 110**

**Leader**

Marie Greene - Mayland CC

Race Bannon - Wake Tech CC

Glen Blackburn - Southeastern CC

Rosanna Hartley - Western Piedmont CC

Terrance Walsh - McDowell Tech CC

Donna White-Cook - Rowan-Cabarrus CC

Mary Zegarski - Blue Ridge CC

Continuing Education:

Talbert Myers - Johnston CC

**CIS 120**

**Leader**

David Oakley - Coastal Carolina CC

Janet Chavis - Roanoke-Chowan CC

Chris Johnson - South Piedmont CC

Jody Ledford - Cleveland CC

Margaret Miller - Guilford Tech CC

Annelle Pegg - Catawba Valley CC

Mary Walton - Carteret CC

Continuing Education:

Clarence Smith - Cape Fear CC

Facilitator:

Linda Lutz - Catawba Valley CC

**CIS 172**

**Leader**

Carola Jones - Beaufort County CC

Wendy Bailey - Wilson Tech CC

Ronald Dougherty - Davidson County CC

Bobby Hoggard - Pitt CC

Liz Mauser - Central Carolina CC

Ruby Morris - Lenoir CC

Michael Sexton - Guilford Tech CC

Continuing Education:

Calvin Dull - Wilkes CC

Facilitator:

Tenette Petelinkar - Robeson CC

**ECO 251**

**Leader**

Lane Grann-Stahl - Central Piedmont CC

Lateef Balogun - Halifax CC

Greg Brown - Martin CC

Joe Franklin - Asheville-Buncombe Tech CC

Donna Harbour - Surry CC

Felix Nyako - Rockingham CC

Charles Thompson - Brunswick CC

Continuing Education:

Bill Adams - Davidson County CC

Facilitator:

Dianne Tyndall - Craven CC

**ENG 111**

**Leader**

Vicki Loy - College of the Albemarle

Joe Argent - Gaston College

Mark Branson - Davidson County CC

Bob Harrison - Southwestern CC

Melinda Lamb - Randolph CC

Ron Layne - Richmond CC

Ann Russell - Bladen CC

Continuing Education:

Elaine Lockhart - Caldwell CC & TI

Facilitator:

Janet Hobbs - Wake Tech CC

**HIS 121**

**Leader**

Bud Mayes - Wilkes CC

John Beck - Vance-Granville CC

John Cabe - Tri-County CC

Monika Fleming - Edgecombe CC

Paige Harris - Wake Tech CC

Mike Latham - Nash CC

Bill Manikas - Gaston College

Barbara Morrison - Bladen CC

Continuing Education:

Dwight Wiggins - Southwestern CC

**PSY 150**

**Leader**

Heather Hebert - Carteret CC

Bill Batman - Western Piedmont CC  
Libbie McPhaul-Moore - Piedmont CC  
Karin O'Donnell - James Sprunt CC  
Sherwood Williams - Johnston CC  
Larolyn Zylicz - Cape Fear CC  
Continuing Education:  
Chet Jarman - Beaufort County CC  
Facilitator:  
Dewey Lewis - Coastal Carolina CC

**SOC 210**

**Co-Leaders**

Eric Miller - Isothermal CC  
Vicki Pate - Fayetteville Tech CC

Ray Brannon - Wayne CC  
Julie Dillon - Central Piedmont CC  
Lewis Gravis - Sampson CC  
Lori Heiger - Alamance CC  
Terina Roberson - Stanly CC  
Continuing Education:  
Ron Valentini - Catawba Valley CC  
Facilitator:  
Will Johnson - Montgomery CC

**Team 11: Online Learning Archive**

**Leader**

Kris Workman - Carteret CC

Charles Harris - Alamance CC  
Amy Kennedy - Brunswick CC  
Hal Lander - Haywood CC  
Duane Leith - Lenoir CC  
Karen McPhaul - Durham Tech CC  
Bill Randall - Forsyth Tech CC  
Penny Sermons - Beaufort County CC  
Jane Strother - Central Carolina CC  
Sam Zahran - Fayetteville CC  
Continuing Education:  
Howard Paris - James Sprunt CC

*Incentives to Support Online Learning Vary by College*

Online instruction is rewarding but not effortless. Like any new skill, learning to teach and develop

content online takes time for trial and error. Instructors may need encouragement to take the leap. How are colleges providing incentive for instructors to try online teaching? Twenty-one distance learning administrators responded with their colleges' approaches.

Respondents noted that most of the work has been done and will continue without large incentives, but rewards exist. Most common is course load reduction during course development, which 11 respondents offer. Five colleges give release grants or summer contract extensions to faculty developing courses. Training in online skills (and in some cases, pay for attending) is offered by another five. Similarly, some colleges send online instructors to related conferences. Other incentives used include priority access to better computers and mentoring from experienced online instructors and webmasters.

Some colleges report unique incentives—low-cost practices that are an economical addition to instructor support packages. These include lowering enrollment caps for online courses, reducing committee assignments, allowing more contract time working from home, using online student interns, and offering online instructors a choice in times when scheduling.

Many online instructors put in extra hours and creative energy because they want to try this new form of education. Still, the administrators responding to this survey unanimously desire better rewards for online faculty. They realize that creative institutional thinking and strong instructor support will foster even more success for online learning.

Course design and student preparation also make an enormous difference in the time it takes to teach an online class. The Virtual Learning Community will spread ideas about good course design to instructors. It will assemble student preparation materials to share with all of the colleges. As the Community grows, the work of online instructors will get easier.

### **Upcoming Virtual Learning Community Presentations**

March 10, Computer Instructors Association, Charlotte

March 17, Learning Resources Association, High Point

March 30, NCCCAEA Conference, RTP

March 30, NCMATYC & NCTYC Conference, Raleigh

April 8, AACC, Washington DC

April 26-28, PRIMA, Wilkesboro

### ***Trainers Begin Writing on Blackboard***

Training from the Virtual Learning Community is coming! Twelve regional trainers attended a workshop in Blackboard CourseInfo on February 3 and 4 at Central Piedmont CC.

These trainers, selected by Work Team 4 of the Community, chaired by Dr. Ron Champion of Beaufort County CC, will design training in Blackboard and online learning theory. In April, they will offer this training to two representatives from each college in their respective regions. Those college trainers will complete the final link in the training chain, bringing training and mentoring back to colleagues at their home institutions.

## ***Western Training Region***

### **Trainers**

*Dennis Keough - Southwestern CC*  
*Norma Marler - Catawba Valley CC*  
*Debra NeeSmith - Rowan-Cabarrus CC*  
*Beth Mitchell - Mayland CC*

### **Colleges**

Asheville-Buncombe Tech CC  
Blue Ridge CC  
Caldwell CC & TI  
Catawba Valley CC  
Cleveland CC  
Davidson County CC  
Forsyth Tech CC  
Gaston College  
Haywood CC  
Isothermal CC  
Mayland CC  
McDowell Tech CC  
Mitchell CC  
Rowan-Cabarrus CC  
Southwestern CC  
Surry CC  
Tri-County CC  
Western Piedmont CC  
Wilkes CC

## ***Central Training Region***

### **Trainers**

*Nancy Bryan - Central Piedmont CC*  
*Mary Harbison - Wake Tech CC*  
*Celia Hurley - Randolph CC*  
*Sylvia Proctor - Johnston CC*

### **Colleges**

Alamance CC  
Central Carolina CC  
Central Piedmont CC  
Durham Tech CC  
Fayetteville Tech CC  
Guilford Tech CC  
Johnston CC  
Montgomery CC  
Piedmont CC  
Randolph CC  
Richmond CC  
Robeson CC  
Rockingham CC  
Sandhills CC  
South Piedmont CC  
Stanly CC  
Vance-Granville CC  
Wake Tech CC  
Wilson Tech C

## ***Eastern Training Region***

### **Trainers**

*Lora Clark - Pitt CC*

*Patrick Keough - Carteret CC*

*Eric Storie - Roanoke-Chowan CC*

*Tricia Woolard - Beaufort County CC*

### **Colleges**

Beaufort County CC

Bladen CC

Brunswick CC

Cape Fear CC

Carteret CC

Coastal Carolina CC

College of the Albemarle

Craven CC

Edgecombe CC

Halifax CC

James Sprunt CC

Lenoir CC

Martin CC

Nash CC

Pitt CC

Pamlico CC

Roanoke-Chowan CC

Sampson CC

Southeastern CC

Wayne CC

## ***A Community for Continuing Education***

North Carolina continuing educators respond to students with a variety of online offerings, some generated at colleges and others by web sites like Education to Go.

The Virtual Learning Community will aid continuing education. Each team has a continuing education expert to ensure that as curriculum courses are developed, related Master Course List courses are also prepared.

Rob Everett, a continuing education leader from Guilford Tech CC noted, "For continuing education managers who don't have full-time instructors to develop content, modules from the Community will make it easier to participate in online learning."

The Community will serve as a model for development of other continuing education courses. "We were floundering with how to begin when the Community came my way," said Elaine Lockhart of Caldwell CC & TI. "This process gives us the roadmap for developing courses which will be available to all community colleges in the system."

## ***Are We Prepared for 2000 and Beyond?***

*by Patrick Keough*

*Carteret Community College*

Computers are changing the rules of education. Students are demanding alternatives. We must ask why, for example, students should drive 30 miles to the nearest community college twice a week for 16 weeks to take Business Law or English Literature when they can get the same quality course from another college without leaving the comfort of home.

Treating students as a captive market is no longer viable as we enter the 21<sup>st</sup> century. We must recognize this shift and find creative solutions to meet the challenge. There will always be a place for traditional classrooms, but our diverse audience, with nontraditional students like single mothers, swing-shift employees, and special populations, demands flexible learning options.

This shift requires us to rethink how we teach, deliver courses, and offer support services. Faculty, staff, and administrators must master new tools to address the changing needs of our clients. New communication forms are stripping away the regional barriers that divided community colleges and universities.

Education is no longer a seller's market! We must not stick our heads in the sand and hope students continue to come to our colleges. Technologically sophisticated students are finding educational services, degrees, and certificates via a combination of technologies. The more options we offer, the more competitive our colleges will be in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Instructors and institutions will collaborate to meet the demands of students and lifelong learners in our state and around the country. These new issues demand that we forget about territory and rethink how we conduct instruction.

This shift empowers faculty, staff, and students to incorporate Internet, video, and threaded discussion in what we do best—educate. If we don't move forward, private sector companies and online universities will fill the void. It's already happening! We must prepare to play a vital role in the education of student populations whether they come from Beaufort or Bombay.

We must prepare for the challenges ahead. We have no alternative.

### **The Community at a Glance**

The Virtual Learning Community is a collaborative effort between all 58 North Carolina community colleges, sharing resources and expertise to expand access to quality online courses and support services. Benefits to colleges will include:

- A library of online credit and non-credit courses that can be offered as-is or adapted to local needs;
- Access to Blackboard CourseInfo for development or delivery of online courses or support materials;
- Online and face-to-face faculty training;
- Tips for effective online course delivery;
- Help materials for online students;
- Online student support services;
- A central web listing of online offerings from each college, with links back to local web sites;
- Newsletters, online discussion, and mailing lists to spur communication;
- Evaluation materials for online courses.

### *For More Information*

For information, contact [Neil Hollands](#), or read previous newsletters online at [Virtual Learning Community](#).

### *In the Next Issue*

Retention of students in online courses

Online components in face-to-face courses

The latest Community developments.

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