

COMMUNITY COLLEGE TIMES



Jimmy Duke, dean of math and natural sciences at Calhoun Community College (Alabama), samples iPod material developed for a course.

Enhancing the classroom experience

BY CARISA CHAPPELL,
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The chalkboard was once a universal symbol for learning. It's been replaced in colleges by state-of-the-art electronic equipment, computer programs and electronic gizmos once banned from classrooms.

In an age when students rely on the

Internet, cell phones and iPods for everything from entertainment to research, colleges are increasingly integrating these devices into curricula to keep material fresh for students.

In Alabama, Calhoun Community College (CCC) has invested in two new "smart" classrooms on campus, featuring document cameras, touch screens, wireless keyboards and LCD projectors. College officials hope to add more such classrooms.

The document cameras allow the teacher to put anything—from a book and teacher notes to diagrams and photos—on display for the class to see on a large screen.

"Technology presents a more engaging classroom experience and students have come to expect it," said Jimmy Duke, dean of math and natural sciences at CCC. "We're always looking to incorporate better technology in the classroom and students are driving us to do so."

One of the latest technologies in use at CCC is Tegrity, which lets students capture lectures as podcasts. The college purchased Tegrity's Campus 2.0 lecture-capture program last year to help serve a growing number of distance learners.

CCC instructors are even using everyday technology such as cell phones and smart phones to poll students.

"It used to be 'Turn your cell phones off and no texting in class.' But you adapt and learn to use them," Duke said. "Why not get them to text about things related to the classroom instead of texting their friends about what they're doing in the afternoon?"

Not all technology catches on. CCC instructors tried using remote devices known as personal response systems so instructors could interact electronically with students, Duke said. While it caught on in some places, the gadgets were difficult for students to find and to sell back to the bookstores. Duke said cell phones and laptops work just as well.

Product manufacturers are keenly aware of technology trends on campus and are constantly developing new products that are easy to use and efficient. Turning Technologies, which sells student response systems, recently announced a new program, ResponseWare, specifically for iPhones and iPods because of the increased use of mobile electronics on campus.

ResponseWare is a polling application that allows students to submit their response to an iPhone or iPod. The application then compiles and presents the aggregated data to the class and also stores it.

Companies will continue to develop technology geared for the classroom as instructors look for new and innovative ways to connect with students and technologies that they use every day, Duke said.

Using technology is not just limited to classrooms and academics. Laurie Buruss, director of the digital media center and a visual arts and media professor at Pasadena City College (PCC) in California is using technology in her introductory course on interactive multimedia and design to help students develop eye-catching portfolios to support job searches. She uses Adobe Acrobat Pro, a multimedia authoring tool that allows students to create media-rich portfolios that can incorporate 3D models, videos, annotation and audio files.

“When we were talking about the best way to be able to show collaboration and team work, the portfolio idea came up again and again,” Buruss said.

E-portfolios help give students an edge when they’re ready to look for jobs, Buruss said. The e-portfolios helped five of her students this year get internships at places like Nickelodeon, Mattel and Warner Brothers.

“Mattel said that they’ve never used someone from a community college before,” Buruss said.

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COMMENTS

SuperTeaching

Do you know if any community colleges use it?

-By Matt Dembicki Sent: Tuesday June 23, 2009

Enhancing the classroom experience

The Univ. of Ala. at Huntsville is involved in a new learning tool called "SuperTeaching." It's appropriate for all ages and has business applications as well. However, research appears sketchy. Has anyone had any experience with it?

-By Anonymous Sent: Monday June 22, 2009

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