



Recording Lessons Live

With three clicks of a button, lecture capture software helps community college stay current and reach a broader audience through distance learning.

TWO YEARS AGO, Columbus State Community College became Ohio's largest provider of higher education distance learning as its online enrollments spiked to more than 11,000. But administrators wanted to find a way to streamline instruction so that students who went to classrooms to learn and those who studied online would receive the same information.

With a traditional track and an online track, the school's nursing program was the ideal testing ground. In this program, content changes often. To adequately prepare graduates to provide health care services, school leaders sought a solution that would keep students updated and keep information consistent while also expanding the range of instruction.

"The nursing program is pretty well known," said Joel Nelson, a multimedia Web developer at Columbus State. "We wanted to take advantage of that and be able to affect nursing in our region and in the state, if possible."

Last year, TechSmith unveiled Camtasia Relay, a lecture capture and presentation software that allows presenters to deliver instruction and information anywhere. It was exactly the type of system that Nelson and his team had been searching for. In the fall of 2008, he implemented a beta version of the tool to test it on a few faculty members.

Immediately, Nelson and the instructors involved were hooked. During their trial semester, they had 600 students view recordings more than 15,000 times; most watched for short periods of time each view. By spring, all of the instructors in the nursing department were recording their lectures for public use.

"Media files can be hosted on any Web server you have," said Rich Boys, product manager for Camtasia Relay. "We really try to make it as flexible as possible."

The team integrated the software into a Blackboard system, and Nelson trained faculty members on the technology. Part of the product appeal is that so much of the process takes place behind the scenes. Once the software is installed on a Mac or PC, a presenter only needs to press three buttons: record, stop, submit.

"They love it because of the ease of use," Nelson said of the faculty, "and the fact that they don't have to worry about anything beyond submission of the lecture."

Once the file is submitted to the Camtasia Relay server, the server can create multiple formats of each recording, including Windows Media, Flash, iTunes and MP3s. The presenter's user profile decides what types



Recordings from many presenters are produced into multiple formats at your server(s) and automatically published to multiple destinations.

of files to create, then publishes the files to a media server and adds a link to the presenter's Blackboard page. When the whole process is completed, the presenter will receive a notification message.

"The server does all the heavy lifting," Boys said. "We designed the software to be as easy as possible for the presenters. They don't have to worry about any of the technology; they just have to worry about their subject matter."

With this tool, instructors have more control over how students receive subject matter. Whereas before, Nelson said, a nursing course might offer a solid 20-hour, in-class lecture. But with a recording, educators have the freedom to break lectures into different chunks and highlight specific points. Also, educators no longer need to worry about lectures becoming out of date.

"Now," Nelson said, "they can easily record the lecture as they're giving it. It has engaged faculty to the point now where they are starting to transition the way that they teach."

For instance, the teaching tool has inspired one nursing instructor to change his teaching strategy. Instead of recording the lecture in class, he started prerecording the lectures and making them available to the students ahead of time. With that method, students are able to use time in class to apply concepts rather than listen to him present information. As a result, Nelson said, the instructor saw an increase in the number of students who passed the exam and received A's and B's.

Columbus State conducted a survey to gauge student response to the software, and the majority of students found the technology easy to use and integrate into their existing learning style, Nelson said. Usage rises

"We designed the software to be as easy as possible for the presenters. They don't have to worry about any of the technology; they just have to worry about their subject matter."

Rich Boys, Camtasia Relay Product Manager, TechSmith

considerably toward the end of a semester when exam time comes around. And as more schools across the country seek to integrate sustainable practices, Camtasia Relay allows students to access information from home, which helps cut down on travel.

"Students like it because it gives them immediate access and the ability to download so they can review the lectures at their own convenience," Nelson said. "That has been the most important thing on their end."

It has been a year since Columbus State first implemented Camtasia Relay in the nursing program. The college, Nelson said, has already integrated the software into a number of other courses including chemistry, physics and biology, and due to popular demand, it plans to expand course offerings in the future.

"Once we had the application here on campus, we could farm it out to whoever needed it," Nelson said. "It allows faculty to be able to have all students essentially listening to the same lecture and same lecturer."

For more information on what TechSmith can do for your school, visit www.techsmith.com or call 517-381-2300.

