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Orientation Online

Student Services, the DDEC, and ITS are collaborating to expand services to reach distance students and appeal to their particular needs.

One of the projects being developed is an online orientation web site. One feature on the site will be Horizon Live streamed audio/video presentations by Dr. Bruce Brewer, on the different types of career services that UWG offers. In addition to the five faculty members who have used HorizonLive, Dr. Brewer is the first staff member to utilize the audio/video streaming capabilities.

www.westga.edu/~online/

UWG to Upgrade to WebCT 3.7 Campus Edition

As one of only five USG Certified servers eligible for the upgrade, UWG will move to WebCT’s premium “Campus Edition” version 3.7, this fall. On August 9th, WebCT support staff from the DDEC and ITS will install the major upgrade.

WebCT Campus Edition 3.7 offers a wider array of teaching and learning tools, provides significant enhancements in overall performance and scalability, and offers extended support for IMS standards. Comprehensive testing in WebCT’s performance lab has consistently shown performance gains of at least 50% over previous versions of WebCT.

The WebCT upgrade features a built-in Equation Editor, designed especially for creating and editing equations in Web pages. Based on MathML, the powerful language for Web-based math, the Equation Editor allows WebCT users to type, manipulate, and edit mathematical notations in many WebCT tools and areas, including: content pages, quiz questions and answers, discussion topics and messages, mail, and notes.

Other enhancements include:

⇒ **Extended Browser Support:** Netscape 4.76 and 6.3.1; Internet Explorer 5.0 or higher, including 6.0 (Note: IE 5.5 SP1 is not supported); AOL 7.0

⇒ **Global Calendar:** Allows users to access and compile calendar entries from multiple courses within one calendar view. Allows users to maintain a private calendar.

⇒ **Integration with Palm™ Datebook:** Allows Palm™ Datebook users to download calendar entries using the Palm HotSync® operation; calendar entries can be associated with a course identifier and displayed in a Palm DateBook.

⇒ **Course Backup Manager:** Instructors can backup and manage all course backups without having to enter a single course (via the new ‘Go to Course Functions’ button on the my WebCT page).

⇒ **Assignment Dropbox:** Instructors may zip all student assignments and download to their computers. Previously, instructors had to download each assignment separately (through a multi-click process).

⇒ **Discussions:** The interface has been improved. Main and Notes Topics can be locked or made “private” (decreasing the need for instructors to move messages due to student error). The number of messages in a collapsed thread is available and unread messages are bolded. When users reply to a message, they are now able to change the subject line to more appropriately reflect the content of the message and the reply stays in the thread.

For more details see: http://distance.westga.edu/upgrade.html

Review and training on the new WebCT 3.7 will be held:

Monday, August 12th, from 10am-1pm, in EDU 243

Friday, August 23rd, from 10am-1pm, in EDU 243

Contact jgubbins@westga.edu to register.
Why doesn’t my student roll in WebCT match the Banner info?

The course database cannot automatically synchronize with the global database. The global database can not automatically synch with Banner. Thus, when info is changed in one, info in another is not changed until a manual update is performed. Anytime the rolls don’t match up, you can ask us to do an update or one could also manually delete students by clicking on their name and hitting “delete”.

WebCT and SCT Banner are working together so that these actions will eventually be automatically synchronized.

I use Office 2000 to create WebCT content. Why is it that some students cannot access these pages or images?

Office 2000's "save as web page" functionality adds XML tags within the HTML code. Most of the XML tags relate to formatting instructions used exclusively by MS products and are considered unnecessary within "standard" HTML code. These XML tags can cause parsing problems with WebCT and Netscape. In many instances of trying to use MS Word 2000, images will not appear, once uploaded to WebCT.

Therefore, we highly recommend that WebCT users use Netscape Composer’s free HTML editor, instead.

Enrollment Using Distance Tech Continues to Grow

Over the last two years distributed enrollment (courses using distance technologies for less than 51% of instruction) has more than doubled. While mostly and fully online course enrollment has also increased, the most significant growth has occurred in courses using the online course tool to merely enhance traditional face-to-face instruction.

Since WebCT was adopted in Fall 1997, an average of 25 new faculty per term have opted to utilize the customizable tool. Most new users cite the ability to improve student-to-student and student-to-teacher communication as the biggest benefit. Many designers are using the online tool to reach out to the growing non-traditional students who appreciate the flexibility of anytime/anywhere learning opportunities. Others just want to find a way to more easily manage grades and disseminate information in larger undergraduate courses.

Some of WebCT’s wide variety of tools and features include a public discussion board, real-time chat rooms, student progress tracking, group project organization, student self-evaluation, grade maintenance and distribution, access control, navigation tools, timed quizzes, electronic mail, automatic index generation, and course content searches.

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<th>Distributed Enrollment (less than 51% DE)</th>
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Enrollment supported by DDEC, by fiscal year

Have YOU got a question for WebCat?
The wise and wonderful WebCat is always on the prowl looking for the latest answers to your WebCT challenges.

E-mail: webcat@westga.edu
Focus on Service

A focus group made up of 12 distance students was held in April on campus. The purpose of the focus group was to evaluate the current satisfaction of distance students with student services and development services, and to discover what improvements should be made to promote a greater sense of community and belonging.

According to Christy Talley, DDEC Student Support Specialist, the focus group allows for deeper evaluation of data obtained from the written surveys, which are distributed to all distance students.

Information was gained regarding admissions and registration, technical support, support from instructor, support from DDEC, development services, and overall satisfaction.

Admissions and Registration – Students were satisfied overall. Two complained about delays regarding their admissions, but stated that these were not related to the fact that they were distance students. Students expressed satisfaction with the ease of Banweb. One suggested that being able to check prerequisites through Banweb would be helpful to distance students.

Other Student Services - Students all reported that they did not feel that being a distant student hampered them in any way from receiving advisement, development, or other services that they needed.

Support from DDEC – Some students contacted the DDEC for technical assistance and reported satisfaction with the quality of help they received.

Support from Instructor – Most students described their instructors as very helpful when they needed assistance, technical or otherwise. One student reported that her instructor was generally helpful, but often seemed too busy.

Suggestions for Improvement – Suggestions for improvements to UWG’s distance program included an increased number of courses, a more rigorous WebCT orientation, and a waiver of student services fees for distance students.

Specific comments from the focus group are available at http://www.westga.edu/~distance/sacs/eval/. The next focus group will be held Spring 2003.

Where is Your DE Advisement Sheet?

All faculty were sent a laminated yellow advisement sheet to assist with advising distance students. If you have misplaced yours, please contact the DDEC at (678) 839-6248 to get a replacement.

Horizon Live Springs Into Success

Five UWG faculty used Horizon Live during its Spring Semester pilot phase. The tool enabled faculty to deliver live audio and visuals to students using their home or work computers. Students were also able to view archived sessions anytime throughout the term.

“By using Horizon Live, in conjunction with WebCT, instructors found that they were able to appeal to many learning styles and to vary the type of instruction offered,” says Christy Talley, Horizon Live administrator at UWG.

Horizon Live was selected by members of the UWG Distance Learning Steering Committee, after a complete review of similar products. Steering committee members include several distance faculty, IT personnel, and other staff.

To learn more about using Horizon Live in a distance or distributed course, contact Christy Talley in the DDEC at x96248 or ctleaty@westga.edu.
**Former DE Student Assistants Conquer Brave New World...**

Working as a student assistant for the DDEC is a challenge. One has to be unfailingly responsible and ever so calm under pressure. A DE Student Assistant has to readily adapt and constantly train using new technologies and then be confident enough to provide critical assistance. Above all, SAs must have a “can-do” attitude and a sense of humor. So, what do DE student assistants get in return for all of this headache? Rewarding on-the-job experience that’s extremely valuable in today’s job market.

Former SA, Brad Massey (’95-’98), works at CNN. Brad is a video editor for Turner Private Networks - an independent company under the Turner Broadcasting umbrella. Brad helps provide specialized CNN content for clients such as Amtrack, the College Television Network, and In-Flight Services (Delta Airlines, etc.).

Brad is also in his fourth season with the Atlanta Braves. His ever changing duties range from camera operation to pre-game technical director to instant replay during the game. Though he gets to sit in the Press Box at Turner Field during every home game, Brad says that he is most happy to return home to his new baby girl Madison.

Another former SA was offered a morning news director position for WSAV in Savannah. Instead, Mark Phelps (’99-’01) opted to go with Turner Networks — he works for all six of them (TNT, TBS, Cartoon Network, Turner Classic Movies, Turner South, and Boomerang). Mark was the first to be hired in Turner Network’s new “Migration Resource Pool”.

Explained Mark, “The job at DL helped me because it gave me such rounded knowledge of satellite operations, which is exactly what we do at Turner. Knowledge of codecs and general troubleshooting for those satellite connections is great to have in my history. I think this knowledge, combined with my knowledge from working at the TV station, is why I was hired first.”

Today Mark is a “Broadcast Operations Control” for Turner Networks. He controls what goes out on the air and adds commercials. Mark is also an accomplished musician who has just produced his first solo record project.

Not to be outdone, former SA Deanne Titus (’97-’00) has worked as a software analyst for Khafra Engineering Consultants since her graduation in 2001. Among her contributions, Deanne identified various database problems and provided operating system programming and scripting for the www.atlantapublicworks.org website.

Titus also helped organize the Quality Assurance Team for the City of Atlanta’s website; was involved in the creation and integration of the web and interface tool used to store all project information; and developed the standards for data collection and management of the Atlanta Sewer Group Project.

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**Student Spotlight Continued...**

"I was able to perfect my public speaking as well as my interpersonal skills (while working for the DDEC). I’ve used these skills while dealing with executives at both CNN and the Atlanta Braves," stated Brad Massey.