Welcome to the 1st Edition of Talon Tips! Talon Tips is an online newsletter produced in the Coles College of Business and is a new and important outlet for communicating the outstanding work being done by our faculty teaching courses in our online undergraduate program. In recent years, both the college and the university have focused significantly on online learning. Since our first online course was taught in fall 2002, the number of sections offered per term has increased from 1 to 50 and the number of students enrolled from 14 to just fewer than 2,000. During the past three years, faculty members were paid over $300,000 in overload compensation for teaching online. Due to the growth of online learning and the impact that it is having on our students and faculty, it is increasingly important that we share best online teaching practices. This newsletter is intended to be one mechanism for doing just that.

Another is a newly formed college standing committee, the Online BBA Committee, charged with facilitating communication among faculty teaching online as well as investigating important continuous improvement initiatives. Faculty members serving on this committee this year include Linda Malgeri (Accounting), Vic Marshall (Management and Entrepreneurship), Vic Wakeling (EFQA), David Albert (Marketing), Jane Campbell (Undergraduate Advising Office) and Justin Cochran (Chair). Thanks to each of you for your service and leadership on this committee.

Finally, a big “thank you” to our new Online BBA Director, Dr. Justin Cochran, for the leadership and energy he is bringing to all of our undergraduate online initiatives. Justin has a PhD in Information Systems from the University of Georgia and joined our faculty this fall after serving as a visiting professor at the University of Pittsburgh. Justin brings a great deal of online teaching experience to his role as director and we are so pleased to have him at Coles.

We hope you enjoy this edition of the newsletter! Most importantly, we hope that you will consider contributing to future editions by writing a column or sharing your own best online learning practices.

Give the Faculty eLearning Community a Look

Most of our days are already full and we’re not looking for something else to monitor or think about! However, there’s a collaborative resource available to those of us teaching online courses. I’m talking about a ‘course’ named ‘Online Collaborative Courses - Faculty eLearning Community’ and it should be one of those ‘courses’ shown on your GeorgiaView VISTA home page. It doesn’t take long to read through the comments that have been posted or to post a comment of your own. You might be able to get some good ideas for ways to improve your course or for solutions to problems that you’ve been experiencing. If we all actively participate in the discussions or share things we have found to be successful in an online environment, we can learn from each other in the same manner in which are students are learning from us.
An Opportunity for Communication

Welcome to YOUR newsletter! You have helped launch the inaugural Coles College of Business Online Program Newsletter by either contributing directly, or by viewing its contents. Both of these aspects are critical to our success, for this issue and beyond.

My vision of this newsletter is to provide a forum for faculty to share best practices in online teaching. This may include pedagogical techniques, technical tips and tricks, or any other valuable insight you may want to share with your colleagues. As with most visions, however, its ultimate form will be decided by the participants. I encourage you to help develop and adapt this newsletter to improve its impact and relevance to you and your colleagues over time.

The inaugural issue has several exciting contributions from Coles faculty and others. I have invited CETL and the College of Humanities and Social Sciences to contribute as well, under the belief that there is expertise that can be leveraged, both “home-grown” and outside of our walls.

I would like to personally thank the contributors to the first newsletter because they have taken a leap with me. No one knew the end product of their contribution when they decided to participate, and among the many other things that have to get done each day, this was beyond the normal call of duty.

I would also like to solicit contributions for the next newsletter. If you like what you see, or think you can make it better, please let me know. Without your contributions, next issue’s pages will be blank.

Justin Cochran
Director of Online BBA, Coles College

Courteous, Courteous, and More Courtesy

The phrase “kill them with kindness” has never been truer than in online learning environments. This can be especially challenging when the common courtesies associated with professor-student interaction seem regularly overlooked. But building the practice into all student communicaténs can have remarkable outcomes.

I typically begin all weekly posts and mail message responses with a “thank you”. Thank you for your contributions last week, Thank you for the insightful questions, or Thank you for being interested in the quality of your work. If I am directing a student to a specific location, or trouble-shooting a technology problem, I ask for them to send an email and let me know if they were successful. All mail messages are sent with a greeting, an inquiry into how things are progressing, and a well wishing close. Typically students will start to mirror the message style and tone. If I continue to receive messages without the same elements, I may ask a student to call me. This opens an opportunity to discuss course communication, exchange a few pleasantries, and establish a better relationship online.

In order to infuse communication and feedback with courtesy, I often rely on a self-created feedback template. The template contains informational pieces of activity review, learning outcomes, and performance expectations. It’s like a form letter without the specific pieces. I couch the template with a personalized greeting, specific corrective actions, and a motivational close. Courtesy does not need to be sacrificed for the sake of time. There are many resources available to offer communication flexibility and they allow you to ‘keep the courtesy in’.

Click here for some time saving tips for student communication.

Elke Leeds
Assistant Professor of Business Information Systems

CETL
Upcoming Training

01.29.10 :: The Ethics of Teaching: Professional Dilemmas and Responsibilities:
Workshop D: Relationships with Students and Colleagues [more]

03.19.10 :: The Ethics of Teaching: Professional Dilemmas and Responsibilities:
Workshop E: Faculty Responsibilities to Students and Colleagues [more]
Using Grading Forms in GeorgiaView Vista

Online discussions are a significant part of online learning as it replaces much of the in-class activity of traditional classes. Typically these discussions represent an “electronic conversation” where the instructor poses questions and students will make their own observations and respond to other students’ observations. For instructors, grading discussions can be a timely task. For students, uncertainty about why they received a certain discussion grade is a common complaint. In GeorgiaView VISTA, the grading form tool addresses these issues.

Grading forms allow instructors to document the rubric or criteria they are using to grade the discussion and highlights to students where points were taken off when they did not meet expectations. A grading form can be set up for each discussion separately or a general grading form can be used for all discussions. See an example here.

Developing an Online Community in Your Class

To start online class, I have three assignments in first 3 weeks to help that help develop a online community:
1. Course Orientation (part of a learning module), with quotes from former students, by name and term they took the class. I get recommendations by asking for them on their second exam.

2. Students prepare profiles to help them get to know each other, and to help them select team members for a team project that lasts 12 - 13 weeks. I post a Word document of the profiles from a prior semester and make another Word document each semester and post in the Internet Cafe and Discussion areas organizer page. (Included in the same Welcome Center - Start Here learning modules as #1 above.)

3. Each student must obtain and submit information on five other students in the class - major, work experience, something that would make the person an good team member, something interesting about each individual. (Teams are 3 or 4 students). This assignment is included in a learning module called Forming and Managing Teams.

A Quick Fix for Problems Viewing Media through Vista

Faculty have reported that some students can’t access multimedia files from GAView/Vista. This problem is likely the result of a glitch. In short, students using Windows XP who have Windows Media Player as their default audio/video player cannot run multimedia files from GAView/Vista. To circumvent this problem, before students download such files, have them reset their audio/video players. iTunes is a popular option, and most students have it on their equipment. It is freely available from www.iTunes.com. Realplayer will also run audio/video files from GAView/Vista, and it is freely available from www.Realplayer.com.

Documentation to assist students in resetting their defaults is available here.

Removing Recommended Videos from Youtube

A common issue when using Youtube videos for classes is that the “recommended” videos can be inappropriate or embarrassing for faculty members and students. One workaround for this issue is to embed the Youtube video in another webpage. Fortunately, there is a simple way to add the clip to a webpage within GeorgiaView Vista.

Click here for a demonstration.
Using LiveScribe Pulse Smartpen for Demonstrating Problems

Hope Baker
Associate Professor of Economics

What is it? I have been searching for a tool that would allow me to work a statistical problem by hand for my online class, as I do on the board in a face-to-face class, without having to create to a full-blown video production. I kept hearing an advertisement for the Livescribe Pulse Smartpen on NPR so I decided to check it out. The Livescribe Pulse Smartpen, which costs about $200, records audio as you write. As stated on the Livescribe website (www.livescribe.com), it is “a computer in a pen.”

What are the benefits? This tool should be used to supplement and not replace instructional software, such as Adobe Captivate. You can quickly demonstrate solution processes, animate solutions to homework and test problems, etc. For example, I recently created a Word document in which I typed solutions to a homework assignment and drew normal curves with the drawing tool in Word. I then embedded under each solution a Livescribe session link for each part of the assignment in which I worked the problem by hand. This gives the auditory and visual learners another way to see the solution developed.

How does it work? Set the pen to record and work a problem on the special dot paper that is pur-chased with the pen, talking through the solution process as if you were sitting with a student. Place the pen in its USB cradle to upload newly recorded sessions to your computer. Review your recorded session and give it a meaningful name. To make sessions available to your students, you then have to upload the session to Livescribe Online. From there, you have several options to “share” the session. The session link can be sent via email, posted in a blog, website or document, posted on Face-book or converted to a PDF file. Check out this link to see an example of a hypothesis test problem I recently posted for my class. You can see viewer comments about the sessions and how many times sessions have been viewed on Livescribe Online. With the purchase of the pen, you get 250MB of storage space; my sessions are typically 3-8 minutes long and require less than 1.1 MB.

What are the limitations? There are several drawbacks to the Smartpen. One, you have to write everything on the dot paper, so you cannot start with a Word or Excel document that has already been created and add to it. Two, it is a bit cumbersome to have to upload the sessions to Livescribe Online in order to share them. Three, I have not found an editing capability, so if you make a mistake in the middle of a problem, you have to start over. This is why this tool is most appropriate for creating short demonstrations of problems that are best worked out on paper.