

NEWS TICKER

Temporary network access simplified . . . familiar department gets a new name . . . off-campus access to library resources improved . . .

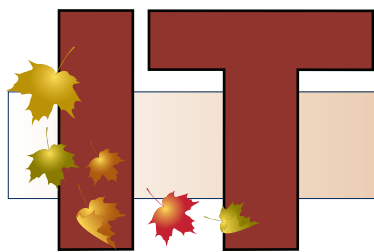
Catch up on **PAGE 2**



A FLOOD OF NEW PLUGS

Shields' popular reading room is adding more than 130 power outlets for laptop users.

Read about it on **PAGE 3**



Information Technology News for the UC Davis Community

T I M E S

Fall 2007

SmartSite arrives. Ready?

The pilot stage is done. From here on out, SmartSite is the main online course-management and collaboration system for UC Davis.

That means its new set of tools is now fully available to help instructors, researchers, staffers and students work and learn together online—with features that exceed the course tools available through the MyUCDavis Web portal.

The rollout is one of the top technological stories on campus this year, as well as the most documented. The system has been updated in each issue of the *IT Times* since mid-2006, and has been explored and described in brochures, training sessions,

how-to tips, discussions, presentations, official communications, and workshops all year. *Dateline* featured the new system Sept. 21.

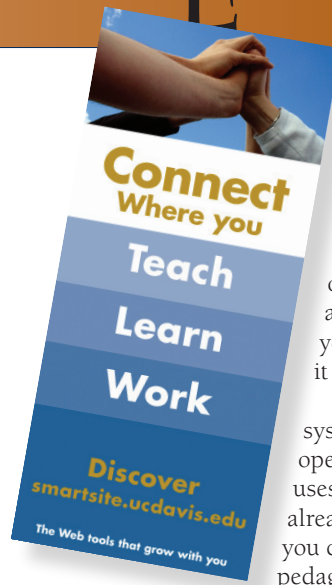
The quantity and variety of training has been expanded to keep pace with the rollout. The campus is offering about 25 percent more SmartSite workshops this fall than it did in the spring, said Steve Faith, faculty technology training coordinator, and nearly twice as many as were offered a year ago. They include sessions for faculty, staff and students in general, as well as for specific groups.

A person who doesn't know anything about SmartSite can usually obtain a basic

working knowledge of how to use the system in about two hours, he added.

As of summer, about 14,000 students, 1,000 faculty, and 4,400 staff members have used SmartSite in some form. That number is now climbing by the week.

"A new phase is about to begin for UC Davis—a phase that encourages new forms of communication, learning, collaboration, and community building," said Pete Siegel, chief information officer and vice provost for Information and Educational Technol-



ogy, in a letter to faculty, staff and students in May. "I invite you to join us and experience it for yourself."

Learn more about the system—how it works, the open-source Sakai software it uses, advice from faculty who already teach with it, plus where you can find training, help or pedagogical advice—at smartsite.ucdavis.edu. ■

LOOK FOR:

the SmartSite brochure inside this issue.

Voorhies scores a coup

The English Department just added a high-def, surround-sound media system. It might be an example for the rest of the campus.

The English Department doesn't usually lead the way in multimedia technology. But it has acquired one of the first high-definition, surround-sound media systems in a classroom environment on campus.

That's good news for the students who study films there. It's good news for others who will use the equipment for seminars, training and various presentations. And it offers an example for other parts of UC Davis as high-definition signals spread further into mainstream campus life.

Research and improving prices helped the department land this technological prize for 126 Voorhies, a first-floor seminar room that can seat a few dozen people. The system was getting wired for power in September, and was due to be ready for use before fall classes began.

"I'd love to say it was all my doing, but my role was solely as pestering nag and asker of technical questions," said Scott Simmon, a professor of English who teaches film classes and helped lobby for the system. "The department's IT services manager, Ron Ottman, is wonderfully knowledgeable and oversaw everything."

It can still speak PowerPoint

The system projects images in a 16:9 ratio—the standard for high-definition



Photo: Sam Woo

Joe Kelley, a principal TV technician in Information and Educational Technology, demonstrates the new system in 126 Voorhies. (That's "The Patriot" up on the screen.)

signals—and uses a Yamaha YSP-1100 5.1 surround-sound system. "5.1" means one bottom-end subwoofer, plus five speakers for the left, center, right, left-rear and right-rear channels. (To get technical, this Yamaha has just one speaker for the five channels, and creates the surround-sound effect by the way it beams the sound into the room.)

To watch a movie with that quality of sound, especially with sharp, clear photography, is a treat. But new visual media is increasingly produced in high-definition formats, so these systems should become more practical than perk for the study of film and images.

The system can handle more prosaic formats, too.

"The cool thing is, not only the film people can use it, but other people can

use it for PowerPoints," said Joe Kelley, a principal TV technician in IET-Academic Technology Services (formerly Mediaworks/Classroom Technology Services) who did the design for the project.

The machine switches automatically to PowerPoint as needed, Ottman said. That's handy when people use the room for seminars, job presentations and training.

ATS designs classroom media setups for "ease of use no matter who's using the room," Kelley said.

The system in 126 Voorhies uses the same media cabinet installed in more than 122 general assignment classrooms across campus. "The classrooms have them, so the bulk of people in our department know how to use them," Ottman said.

The Voorhies cabinet has empty slots that will eventually hold either a Blu-ray or

HD DVD optical disc player, once it's clear which of the two competing high-definition formats will become the industry standard.

"What's really cool," Ottman said, "is the [ATS] people did the whole thing."

Except for a part-time student assistant and a student assistant webmaster "who's going away," Ottman is the sole tech employee for the four servers, 195 computers and 220 people in the English Department.

The room has all sorts of uses, Simmon said.

"It has held some English seminars but is mainly used for the department's public lectures, symposia, and a few small-scale film screenings," he said. "Last year, for instance, the Medieval Research Cluster sponsored a series of films that engage in some way with the Middle Ages. Each screening featured a brief introductory talk by a member of the faculty or a graduate student."

How it ended up in Voorhies

The department revamped the seminar room at the start of the decade, but held off improving the visual equipment. Projectors still had to be rolled in on a cart. Early last year, Ottman and others started to work on improving the media.

"We wanted to do a digital projector and hang it from the ceiling," he said in late August, discussing the machine during a visit to the room. "When the time came to outfit this room, [Scott] suggested we look at this."

As Ottman investigated, it became clear "that as video equipment prices keep falling, installing state-of-the-art high-definition video and a sophisticated sound system wasn't really all that much more expensive than the old standard," Simmon said.

See Voorhies, page 2

Email problems will get an outside look

Pete Siegel, chief information officer for UC Davis, has formed an independent group to review what caused the severe service disruptions that affected thousands of the campus's 52,000 email accounts in mid-September.

Led by Dean Enrique Lavernia of the College of Engineering, the group will include faculty and campus technical staff. They will work with Information and Educational Technology to understand what happened, and to recommend adjustments, as needed, to the way IET monitors and responds to events involving email.

The story of what went wrong is complex. Earlier this year the campus started using a new back-end email architecture, Cyrus, that improved email performance. It has been used by dozens of universities and has a reputation

for stability. But a conflict emerged in late summer between Cyrus and the campus operating system that runs it, causing thousands of email clients intermittently to lose access to their messages for much of Sept. 10 through 14, the last week of Summer Session II.

Service was restored at the end of most days, but would get disrupted again the next day as workday demand resumed.

The campus Data Center worked with experts from Cyrus, Sun Microsystems, and other universities to find out what went wrong and fully restore service. System administrators added more servers and moved email accounts to the new machines, to spread the accounts over more servers. That got email running reliably again. No messages

were lost, and the service was stable the following week.

Administrators continue to work on solving the underlying problem, and are closely monitoring the system. One long-term solution might have the side effect of downloading duplicate copies of existing emails for some clients. IET will notify them in advance.

The review group will report its conclusions directly back to Siegel, who is also the vice provost for IET. The group's assignment and findings will be posted at vpnet.ucdavis.edu/email_review.cfm.

For updates or to read more, visit TechNews—IET's campus tech information service—at technews.ucdavis.edu. To report problems or get assistance with email, contact the IT Express help desk at (530) 754-HELP (4357). ■

All-hours study room adds 137 power outlets

The search for a power outlet will soon become much easier for students who work on their laptops at the library. Over the summer, Shields Library started adding outlets in the Extended Hours Reading Room, a students-only hall entered from the outside. The room, often crowded as the only study area on campus that never closes, used to have just seven outlets. By early fall quarter it is scheduled to have 144, or about one for every chair.

Last school year, students mentioned the lack of outlets to Eric Friedman, a student senator for the Associated Students of UC Davis. He wrote a student government bill to raise funds, and talked with Helen Henry, associate university librarian for administrative services. The students joined with the library and other campus organizations, including Information and Educational Technology, to pay the cost of \$15,960.

"I'm really excited about it. Essentially we'll have a fully functional portable computer lab," Friedman said. "The 24-hour room has a lot of potential."

"It's a great project," commented recent graduate Stephanie Nuccielli, who had attended a student focus group on the subject. "It was a little annoying because before we couldn't just sit anywhere, we'd have to go find a table near an available outlet."

Those tables, Nuccielli said, were often either occu-

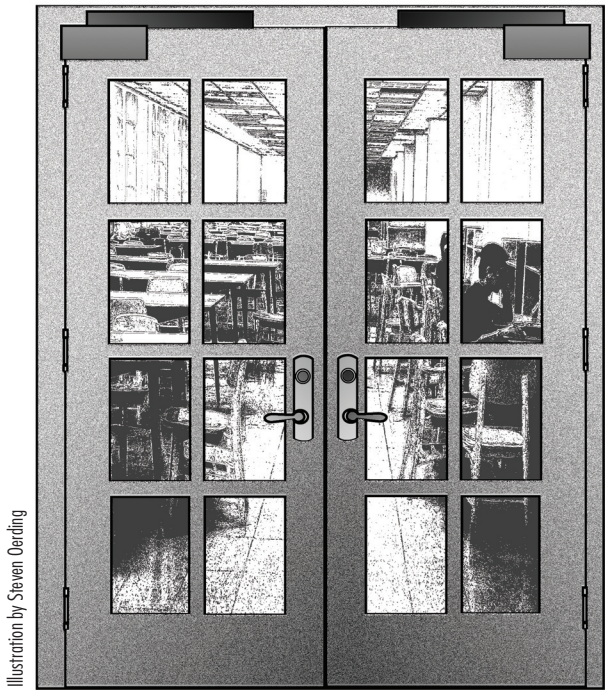


Illustration by Steven Darling

Shields' Extended Hours Reading Room

pied or in the wrong place.

The outlets are being installed in carrels facing the walls and along the tops of the long tables that stretch out from the windows. An area without outlets will be designated for students who don't need any.

A similar project undertaken and funded by the library in summer 2006 added 90 outlets in the second and third floors of the south wing of Shields, and fixed others that weren't working. ■

Voorhies (from page 1)

"Most classrooms have 'data projectors' more suitable for laptop PowerPoint presentations and have tinny sound systems with speakers nowhere near the screens," Simmon said. "UCD [needs] to catch up with the rapid advances in video presentation equipment for the classroom."

"Of course, 126 Voorhies is itself not completely ideal," Simmon said. "It's difficult, for instance, to close out light. But the room is now one example of what might be done elsewhere on campus, at relatively small additional costs."

A question all over the country

The system cost about \$14,000 total. The Dean's Office of the Division of Humanities, Arts and Cultural Studies covered much of the expense, so other parts of the division can also use the room.

Most UC Davis classrooms have a mono (single-channel) signal, Kelley said, and don't really need stereo. But the technology is changing.

"High-definition is coming to campuses, and we need to look for ways to implement that signal," he said.

"We're asking, in how many classrooms should we install that?" Kelley said. "That's the question everyone has right now, in the educational environment all around the United States." ■

READ MORE:

To read more about the Department of English, visit its Web site at www.english.ucdavis.edu.

Re: Your endless email overload. NTN

If your inbox routinely gets crammed with more email than you want, you're far from alone on campus.

It's not just a UC Davis problem, of course. A recent study on email stress by academic researchers at Glasgow and Paisley universities in the United Kingdom found that some British office employees check their inbox up to 40 times an hour. (Researchers considered this a bit, um, excessive.)

One-third of the participants said they felt stressed by the amount of email, and felt pressured to respond quickly. But checking frequently, or responding on demand, interrupts a person's concentration. That harms any task that requires sustained, focused attention.

Maybe that resembles conditions you sometimes see at your desk. A few coping strategies, plus various tools available at UC Davis, can help you tame the load.

Tell 'em 'no thanks needed'

Here are some ideas, distilled from advice offered by various email experts.

1) Decide when to read your email. Check your inbox infrequently. Decide how often, then stick to it. Consider turning off the automatic notice that tells you you've received a new message.

2) Don't be part of the problem. Use the "reply all" button sparingly. Consider that to get fewer messages, you might want to send fewer yourself.

When you do write an email, make sure that your subject line is clear and your message is concise and to the point.

3) Manage your inbox. One idea is to file messages in folders, or to create rules so that messages are automatically delivered to specific folders. For example, send all your email newsletters into one folder.

One caveat: make sure the folders are based on content—not, say, on a person. Otherwise you may end up with several overlapping folders that make it difficult for you to categorize and find items.

Another inbox strategy is to immediately move the email into a task or calendar item.

The worst thing you can do, according to experts, is to check your email and not act on it.

4) Create some common email etiquette. Some people find it rude if they send an email and never hear back. Others grit their teeth at cheery emails that merely say, "Thanks!"

So, talk to your frequent correspondents and come up with some norms; maybe add NRN (No Reply Needed) or NTN (No Thanks Needed) on the subject line.

Maybe you can limit some responses to the subject line, so the recipient doesn't need to open the file. Code that message with an NMF, for No Message Follows.

Maybe it doesn't need to be an email

Another reason for the email overload is that we rely on it for most of our projects and communications. But numerous other tools—instant messaging, collaborative workspaces, social networking spaces, blogs, wikis, even phones—can be more efficient.

Try:
1) Instant Messaging (IM). It's a popular way to converse quickly. Although IM is text-based, like email, the communication is more conversational. IM is generally less intrusive than a phone call, because recipients do not have to reply immediately, and can step away from the exchange and return when ready.

SmartSite, the new online course-management system at UC Davis (smartsite.ucdavis.edu), has a chat tool you can use like IM.

Free IM services are also available from providers like Yahoo, AIM, and MSN.

A caution: Social Security and credit card numbers are not secure in emails or instant messages. Consider the purpose and content of your message when deciding how to send it.

2) Shared, online workspaces. Shared hard drives have existed for years, but new Web-based tools like SmartSite are making it easy to work together online. Participants can upload documents to their SmartSite Resources folder, or they can use SmartSite's wiki tool, which allows joint writing and editing of a shared document.

And if you use SmartSite, consider your ...
3) SmartSite notification preferences. The system lets

To make tech interesting, watch how people use it



by Bill Buchanan

The times require us to stay open to new technology. So what's a good way to learn about it?
A couple of events I experienced this summer make the case for learning through humor, observation and plain talk among colleagues.

The first event was simple. It centered on an email I received on a Friday afternoon in August from my 15-year-old daughter. Our family had already decided to see "Hairspray" that night, but then Megan decided she also wanted to bring a friend and get dessert downtown afterwards. She knew she had to contact me at work to see if I'd agree in time for her friend to make arrangements.

Call me? No, I was trying to get stuff done and would probably give her a parental brushoff, like I'm too busy, not now, we'll talk later.

I learned how to fend off ill-timed phone calls decades ago.

But she knows I like humor and stories. So she sat down at our Mac at home, wrote a short satirical letter—can't share, sorry, she's a millennial, she'd probably retaliate in some form of media I don't know about yet—teamed with her 10-year-old sister for some melodramatic photos, attached them to the email, and sent the whole thing over unannounced with the title "movie dessert OPEN."

Of course I opened it. How often do you get an email like that when it isn't spam? And of course I liked it. I showed the photos to a few people I work with—a couple even seemed to enjoy them—then emailed her back and said, Sure!

Lesson: The smart use of technological tools can surmount traditional barriers. This time the tools were very modest—just digital photos and email, if email even still counts as a technological tool. And the barrier was small—my aversion to personal phone calls when I'm trying to

GMAIL STUDENT TRYOUT PLANNED FOR FALL

This fall the campus intends to invite about 500 students to join a pilot project that will use Gmail, from Google Inc., as their main campus email system.

Creating local email programs—or updating existing ones, to make them comparable to the tools offered by Internet companies like Google—would be prohibitively expensive. So the campus wants to see if working with Google can get UC Davis students a better set of tools than

the campus alone can provide, and wants to collect data to decide if Gmail should be offered to all students later on.

The service will mostly feel like part of campus email. Students will keep their @ucdavis.edu address and be able to access their accounts from the MyUC-Davis Web portal. The campus will offer tech support through the IT Express help desk.

(The students can also use the other tools offered in Google Apps, such as the chat room and calendar, but support for those tools will come directly from Google.)

The pilot is due to start near the end of November. A survey will ask participants for their comments. Other UC campuses are also looking into teaming with Google for student email, and the Office of the President is negotiating a systemwide contract with the Mountain View company.

Go to vpiet.ucdavis.edu/student.email.cfm to learn more. ■

users set their preferences (in My Workspace) for how they would like to receive announcements, email, resources, and syllabus items (when applicable).

Users can have all notices sent to their email, or they can get a daily email summary, or they can choose not to have email sent at all—and instead view the latest notices online when they log into SmartSite.

4) The telephone. If you and a colleague have emailed back and forth numerous times, trying to solve a problem or develop a project, try the phone. Calling someone—or

See Email, page 4

CAMPUS TECHWrapup



CHANCELLOR'S IT CONFERENCE MATERIAL AVAILABLE ONLINE

The role and impact of information technology on UC Davis received a thorough review at the UC Davis Chancellor's Fall Conference at Lake Tahoe Sept. 16-18. About 150 faculty, staff, students, and alumni were invited to the annual event, which shares views on different topics important to the campus.

The discussions addressed specific areas and generated concrete suggestions for the campus. This year's agenda included technology as an enabler, learning in the digital age, and innovative uses of technology in research and public outreach. Breakout sessions ranged from IT planning, and the role of IT in teaching and learning, to the impact of IT on the culture of the university.

Pete Siegel, vice provost for Information and Educational Technology, planned to meet with the conference facilitators after the event to discuss their recommendations. IET will also form a group to discuss priorities and develop an action plan. For reading materials, presentations, talks and some podcasts from the conference, go to vpiet.ucdavis.edu/fall-conference.cfm.

CHANGE IMPROVES OFF-CAMPUS ACCESS TO LIBRARY RESOURCES

World-class researchers. International scholars. Undergrads studying abroad. Telecommuters. More than ever, UC Davis faculty, staff and students need easy access to UC Davis library resources from all over the world. A new service will help that happen.

This summer the University Library, working with Information and Educational Technology and the School of Law, started offering access through a virtual private network (VPN). The technology creates a secure connection between remote locations and the campus network, making it easier for authorized individuals off campus to use the library's materials. Until now, off-campus users had to use a proxy service to get access, which restricted certain licensed materials to on-campus use.

The change responds to faculty requests for more seamless access to the library's resources. (Access by proxy server will continue to be offered until it's no longer needed.)

The VPN allows access to more materials, increases security, and doesn't require users to change their browser settings. All they need is an Internet connection, campus login ID, and Kerberos password. For help using the VPN option with licensed resources, contact a librarian subject specialist or email the library. To learn more or to log in using VPN, go to www.lib.ucdavis.edu/ui/services/connect/vpn.

DIGITIZING THE 13TH CENTURY

For a session called "Maps, Maps and More Maps" at the Summer Institute on Teaching and Technology, Laurie Glover, a lecturer in the University Writing Program, discussed how she uses paper and digitalized maps to teach students about cultural literacy in her "The Nature of Exploration" class for the Nature and Culture Program. This particular map, from the 13th century, is called the "Psalter map."

MEDIAWORKS, CTS GET NEW NAME: ACADEMIC TECHNOLOGY SERVICES

Mediaworks and Classroom Technology Services, two areas of Information and Educational Technology that merged last fall, have a new name for the combined department: IET-Academic Technology Services.

The choice follows discussion and careful planning, both in and outside the department, with options reviewed by faculty and people from the campus library and the Teaching Resources Center. The naming committee wanted a choice that was logical and intuitive to the community, had a broad definition, and would still work if the department expands or changes its services in the years to come.

"These committees and individuals reviewed our proposal, and were unanimously in support of this approach," said ATS Director Liz Gibson. "All felt that this captured well the role of the combined unit."

ATS is a large and varied unit, offering services ranging from classroom tech support and audio-visual equipment rentals to podcasting, video production and graphic design. Its services are not changing.

IET has started to revise its brochures, signs and other material to remove the old names, and has acquired the Web domain name of ats.ucdavis.edu. A page is active at that address. For questions about the name change, contact Jennifer Winning at jtwinning@ucdavis.edu.

"I like the word 'academic' better than 'instruction' or 'classroom,' and I like 'technology' better than 'media,'" said Jon Wagner, director of the Teaching Resources Center and a professor of education. "The new terms are broader and suggest the complementary contributions of technology to both research and teaching."

Gail Yokote, associate university librarian for the sciences and interim associate university librarian for technical services, said the new name "more accurately reflected the range of services provided and the audience expected to be served."

"Also," she added, "it is easy to remember."

CAMPUS REVIEW CHOOSES CONNECT PRO

A unit of Information and Educational Technology has finished evaluating Adobe Connect Professional and Elluminate, two software products that help people confer and work together online. Its report says Connect Pro offers the best fit for campus needs.

"When looking at the key issues, Connect Pro currently comes out ahead," said Liz Gibson, director of IET's Academic Technology Services (formerly Mediaworks and Classroom Technology Services). Those factors include cost, video capacity and quality, plus content development capabilities.

Connect Pro doesn't yet meet disabled-access requirements set by federal rule Section 508, but Adobe is working on it. "We will continue to push Adobe to work on accessibility, as we do now with all vendors," Gibson said.

ATS invited campus instructors to join a pilot tryout comparing both products starting in 2006.

The current campus license allows up to 200 concurrent users, which more than meets the present demand. "We have not exceeded about 70," Gibson said. "Although the software is being used frequently, it has not reached a point where we have large numbers of concurrent meetings, so our license is carrying us longer than we anticipated originally."

People can use Connect Pro (formerly Breeze Meeting) and other online communications and collaboration tools in many different ways for instruction, research, outreach, and general business meetings. Clients can use it to watch presentations together, share a digital whiteboard or other drawing tools, or do similar tasks online.

To learn more about Connect Pro at UC Davis, contact ATS at (530) 752-2133. The application is not free, but an Educational Technology Resource Grant can help cover the cost; go to iet.ucdavis.edu/teaching/etra.cfm to learn more about the grants.

SECURITY SYMPOSIUM PODCASTS AVAILABLE

For anyone interested in computer and network security, UC Davis was a good place to visit June 20-22, when more than 240 UC technical professionals attended the third biennial UC Davis IT Security Symposium. They participated in more than 40 lecture and hands-on lab sessions. The sessions covered a range of topics, including disaster recovery planning, authentication, UC Davis cyber-safety policy, secure coding practices and protecting personal identity information.

Materials and podcasts from many of the sessions are available at itsecuritysymposium.ucdavis.edu.

NEW ONLINE TEMPORARY AFFILIATE FORM IMPROVES NETWORK ACCESS

It should soon get easier for people who don't work at UC Davis—visiting instructors, for example, or short-term employees—to get temporary access to the campus computer network. They can do it through the new Web-based Online Temporary Affiliate Form (Online TAF).

Non-affiliates have been able to apply for a personal campus computing account for years, but the process used paper and campus mail, and is laborious and slow by today's standards.

Online TAF changes all that. A group of campus programmers, administrators, and project managers has created an application that instantly routes information to the next

person in the approval chain. The process usually involves three people: applicant, sponsor and approver. If all three work quickly, the applicant can get temporary access in as little as 10 minutes.

Once the applicant gets access, the campus can set up a temporary UC Davis computing account. The account will remain valid for up to one year and can be renewed, depending on circumstances. The Online TAF has passed beta testing and quality assurance, and is due to be released soon. Learn more at email.ucdavis.edu/email/accountproxyprogram.php.

EMERGENCY NOTICE SYSTEM DUE BY SPRING

The campus is getting closer to acquiring an automated system capable of sending mass phone or email messages during emergencies to everyone affiliated with UC Davis.

A committee directed by Valerie Lucus, campus emergency manager, chose an emergency notification service from W.A.R.N., a Tennessee technology company, this summer. (W.A.R.N. stands for Wide Area Rapid Notification.) Chancellor Larry Vanderhoef has appointed a task force, with members from the Medical Center and throughout the campus, to oversee the implementation and rollout of the system. The goal is to have it fully operating by spring.

UC Davis began looking into buying an emergency notification service in mid-2006 as part of a larger approach to emergency communications. It would help emergency response coordinators quickly send accurate information over multiple communication devices to any number of recipients. Go to vpiet.ucdavis.edu/emergencyplanning.cfm for more information. ■

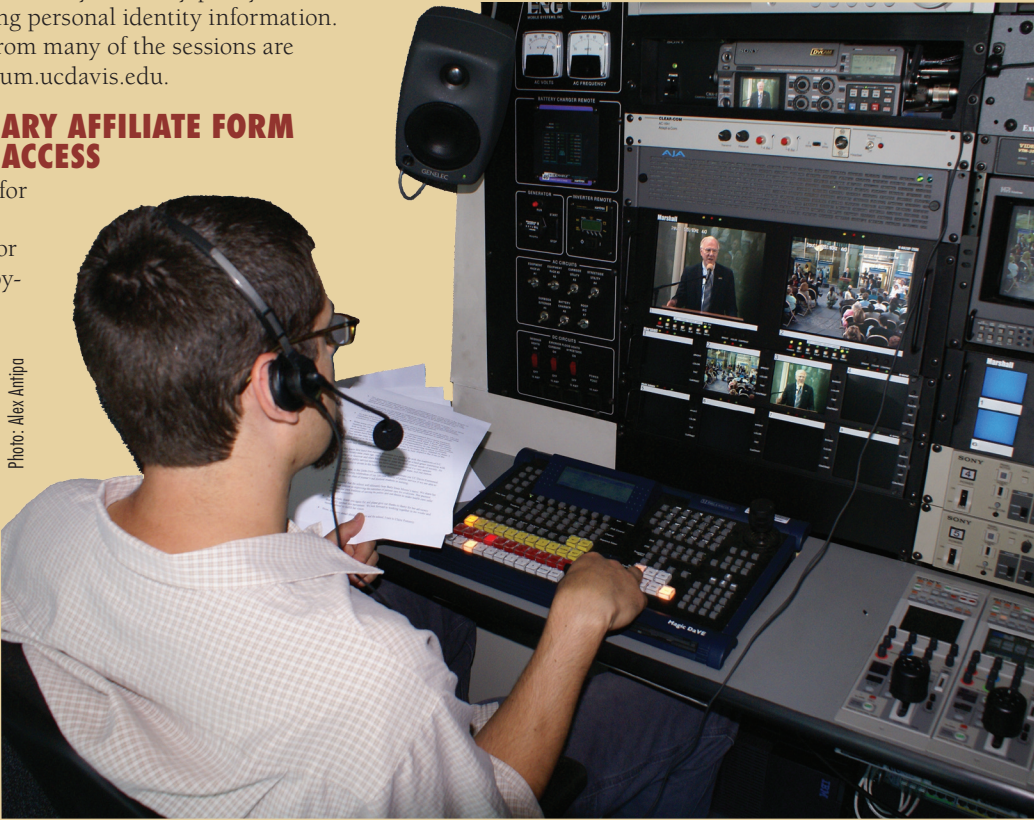


Photo: Alex Andino

On July 31, IET-Academic Technology Services webcast the announcement that the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation was giving UC Davis \$100 million to create the Betty Irene Moore School of Nursing. Producer/Director Jeremy Cooke oversaw the camera work. More than 500 people, including Betty Moore, watched online. (She was in Hawaii.)

Podcasting lectures, one year later: A quiet, generally favorable start



The numbers don't really show it yet, but podcasting is starting to take hold on campus.

Fall 2007 marks the start of the second full year of the campus podcasting program, and so far, less than 100 instructors are using it to record their lectures. At the end of spring quarter, 49 main-campus classes were registered to podcast through the Information and Educational Technology service, although only 38 posted material. The demand forecast for this fall is about the same.

Rodd Kleinschmidt and Charlie Turner of IET-Academic Technology Services (ATS) both work with the podcast service. They ascribe the numbers so far to faculty concerns that podcasts depress class attendance, and to limited access to podcasting hardware in classrooms—just 10 had installed podcast hardware last year, although

18 have the hardware now. Plus, some faculty don't want their lectures recorded.

But instructors who have used podcasts generally like the experience. And students appreciate the service—sometimes for unexpected reasons. So odds are, the use of podcasts to record and distribute lectures will keep growing.

Helpful for ESL students, post-lunch sleepiness

Liz Applegate, a senior lecturer in the Nutrition Department, is a campus podcast veteran who joined the campus pilot project two years ago. She podcasts her lectures and review notes, then posts them through iTunes for easy downloading for her Nutrition 10 course.

Nutrition 10 is a lively class with up to 600 students. Applegate said the podcasts, combined with the reviews and posted lectures, offer students a fail-safe way to get course material. If students miss class, she directs them to the podcast. That saves her time and makes it easier for students to get the information.

Applegate would like her students to use the podcasts in the right way—to reinforce the information, not as a substitute for coming to class. “If you have a choice between the Nutrition 10 podcast and Green Day,” she often tells students, “pick the podcast.”

Victoria Cross, another veteran of the podcast pilot and a lecturer in psychology, uses her podcasts to evaluate the information, organization and flow of her lectures, as well as to make them available. She was surprised at the variety of reasons why students find the podcasts useful.

“I have heard from ESL students that if I use a word or phrase that is unfamiliar, they put a mark in their notes and come back to it later on in the podcast with a dictionary to help identify what was said,” she said. That helps them keep up with the lecture and not worry about what they missed.

A busy single mom who found it hard to stay alert during the lunch-hour class told Cross she listened to the podcast later in the day to reinforce the lecture.

Student feedback leads Cross to believe that the availability of podcasts frees her

students to spend more class time thinking about the material, rather than just taking notes. She also suspects class discussions have improved.

Some doubts for large classes

Erwin Bautista, a lecturer in Neurobiology, Physiology and Behavior, says podcasting has worked very well for his smaller classes. He's less certain about their influence on his courses with 250 students or more.

The major disadvantage, he said, is that podcasts plus the relative anonymity of a big class “may make it really tempting for a student to skip class.”

Podcasts are useful when students use them as supplements to lectures, not as replacements, Bautista said.

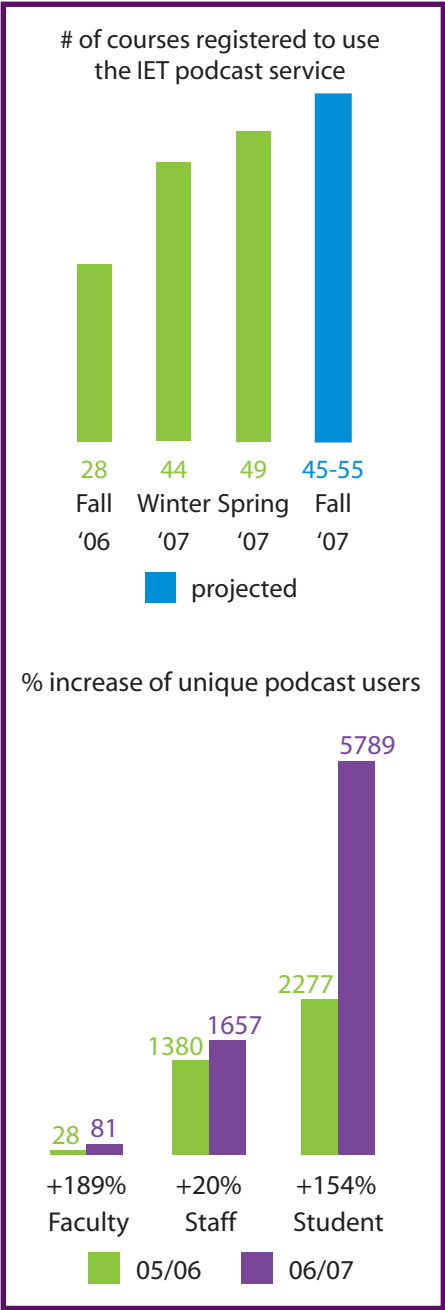
“I'm beginning to believe that the

availability of podcasts might encourage absenteeism, simply because students know this resource exists and that podcasts are accurate audio copies. They may even trust it more than borrowing lecture notes from a student who attended that day.”

“But they should understand,” he added, “that they'd miss out on those special things and nuances that are only experienced during lecture, which the podcast doesn't replicate.”

“Anyway, I'll most likely use it this

“I have heard from ESL students that if I use a word or phrase that is unfamiliar, they put a mark in their notes and come back to it later on in the podcast with a dictionary to help identify what was said.”
—Victoria Cross



year,” Bautista said. “Maybe the benefits outweigh the bad behavior that the podcasts may encourage. We'll see.”

Students like it

Students seem to like podcasting. In 2006-07, student use of the service rose 154 percent over the prior year.

Applegate recently surveyed her Nutrition 10 class, asking students if the podcasts helped. Eighty-five percent of the students who answered strongly agreed, and 13 percent agreed.

The UC Davis School of Medicine operates its own podcasting service separate from IET. Unlike the main campus, all of the medical school's lecture halls, classrooms and labs are equipped to record audio and video. The school records lectures only if the instructor or speaker consents, said Roger Santos of ATS.

Students are glad to have the recordings to help them review material, he said.

About 80 percent of the core classes in the School of Veterinary Medicine will offer podcasting this fall, estimated Instructional Media Development Specialist Chris Brandt. The school started podcasting a few classes in fall 2006; most core classes were using the service by spring. The recordings are posted on CERE, the school's version of SmartSite. (That approach also lets the school control access to the recordings.)

There's been no sign of depressed attendance, he said. Students have appreciated having the chance to review a lecture.

“Everything I've heard about podcasts is positive,” Brandt said. “There's no harm in having it, and for those who use it, it's exceptionally valuable.” ■

READ MORE:

For more information, including how UC Davis classes are recorded and how the technology works, go to podcast.ucdavis.edu.

Email (from page 3)

meeting in person—lets each person deal immediately with whatever questions or issues come up.

And an old favorite: Spam-swatting

One final, familiar idea: block as much spam as you can. On a typical day, the campus system will process about 2.7 million email messages, of which 1.2 million will be rejected as spam; another half-million is likely spam.

If your email account resides on one of the campus email servers, you can use the campus spam filter to deflect much of the junk.

Each piece of email that goes through

the campus system is ranked for its potential spaminess and given a score from 0 to 14.

From 0 to 4, the message is most likely legitimate email; from 5 through 9, it's probably spam, and from 10 through 14, it's almost assuredly spam. Anything that earns a 15 gets the boot.

You can choose your own screen threshold; learn more at email.ucdavis.edu/secure/spamfilter.php. ■

READ MORE:

For more information about email at UC Davis, visit the Email Postmaster's Office at email.ucdavis.edu.

Advice from TAs

For one of its sessions on July 19, the Summer Institute on Teaching and Technology asked a few graduate student TAs to describe what they consider to be good teaching at UC Davis. They were happy to assist: They like instructors to have a clear syllabus, communicate clearly, be predictable—and they offered ideas on how best to use classroom tech and work with TAs.

Read more about SITT—and get campus tech news as it happens—at TechNews, a free service run by Information and Educational Technology. Search, read or subscribe at technews.ucdavis.edu.

A TechNews highlight

Photo: Leslie Madsen-Brooks

Michelle Yates, graduate student in American Studies

IT Times technews.ucdavis.edu

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