24-Hour Call Center Goes Live Today

Starting this Spring 2008—more specifically, Dec 3rd-- students will have 24-hours-a-day, 7-days-a-week access to technical support for eConnect, eCampus and the DCCCD website. That means help online and on the phone anytime of the day or night.

The LeCroy Center has contracted with Presidium Learning to provide "a live person" level of support for students, staff and anyone entering the DCCCD website. According to Emilio Ramos, District Director of Instructional Technology, "Presidium Learning will provide a tiered call system, which operates on levels 0 - Level 4, for students, faculty and staff 24-hours a day.

Level 0 is a self-help method in which the customer searches a knowledge-base for answers to common questions. If additional support is needed, callers will be instructed to call a support line any time of the day or night and a technical support operator will answer the phone. In the event the support operator cannot answer the question, the situation becomes a Level 3 and Level 4, and the caller is connected to one of the LCET Help Desk Operators for more specific details and assistance. The Help Desk is available 7:00 am to 12:00 midnight, Monday thru Friday, and from 1:00 pm to 12:00 midnight on weekends.

In addition to phone and self help knowledge-bases, the new services will include live internet chat, email, and an online ticketing system that students and faculty can use to submit issues or problems. These requests are taken and answered in a timely manner. This raises the level and quality of technical support that the DCCCD will offer to all students and faculty. It is important to note that during the hours of 8:00 am to 5:00 pm, Monday thru Friday, all faculty calling the faculty support line will not be routed to Presidium operator unless our technical advisers are busy dealing with other faculty. After hours all calls will be routed to the Presidium operators.

This new call center approach could essentially become the first point of contact for students, employees and faculty. Ultimately, helping to facilitate support for all aspects of the district as requests for services can be dealt with by the technical support staff or forwarded to specific departments within the colleges.

Distance Learning Strategic Plan Update

During 2005/2006, the Chancellor’s Staff adopted a priority for the development of a strategic plan for district-wide distance learning. With the leadership of Vice Chancellor Andrew Jones, this plan was produced and published in early October 2007. The vision statement for distance learning includes a commitment for the DCCCD to be the distance learning provider of choice for students seeking quality learning and economic value by 2015.

Immediately following that presentation, the Steering Team appointed 11 subcommittees assigned to work around the 5 goals identified as a part of the plan. The five goals relate to assessment and forecasting, resource alignment, course design and delivery, professional development, and comprehensive infrastructure.

These subcommittees are chaired by representatives of the Steering Team in combination with others identified with special expertise in the assigned areas. There are more than 100 subcommittee members, representing all employee groups and locations. The primary work of the subcommittees will begin in earnest after a planned January 25 orientation meeting, but all subcommittees are already beginning their initial planning for the assigned work.

While significant progress is expected in confirming the requirements for implementation of the distance learning strategic plan in Spring 2008, it is also expected that the implementation date for most of those actions will be
Nearly Twenty Percent of All U.S. Higher Education Students Taking at Least One Online Course

The most recent Sloan survey of online education, Online Nation: Five Years of Growth in Online Learning, has just been released and is available as a free download from the Sloan-C web site. This fifth annual study of the state of online learning in U.S. higher education reports that the number of online students have grown to just under 3.5 million. Other findings in this year’s report, supported by the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation and based on responses from more than 2,500 colleges and universities, include:

* The 9.7% growth rate for online enrollments far exceeds the 1.5% growth of the overall higher education student population.
* Two-year associate’s institutions have the highest growth rates and account for over one-half of all online enrollments for the last five years.
* All types of institutions cite improved student access as their top reason for offering online courses and programs.
* Online is not seen as a way to lower costs; reduced or contained costs are among the least-cited objectives for online education.
* A large majority (69%) of academic leaders believe that student demand for online learning is still growing.


Wimba: Taking Webconferencing and Classrooms to the Next Level

Here’s a way to personalize your online courses by holding live online classes, office hours, special guest presentations, web-conferences and meetings—using this new tool, Wimba. This desktop conferencing system is a great tool for synchronous meetings, online and for live virtual classrooms with all the added perks—audio, video, application sharing and content display.

Wimba Live Classroom 5.0 will be available to all DCCCD faculty and staff starting this Spring 2008. With the virtual classroom, multimedia elements are possible seamlessly within the eCampus Blackboard system. All that is needed is a computer, microphone and a webcam.

The live sessions conducted by an instructor or meeting host are can be archived enabling playback/review at a later time. Although cameras can enhance the dynamics of the course, they are not required tools. Participants can connect via telephone or the Internet, and enjoy class discussions with Q & A, live chats, presentations and electronic polls.

Instructors consider personal interaction to be one of the most valuable elements of the teaching and learning process. Wimba Classroom allows faculty and students to build relationships by combining state-of-the-art interactive technologies such as voice, video, application sharing, polling, and whiteboarding, with traditional best practices of instruction. Now, enjoy the best elements of face-to-face and online instruction as faculty and students can talk to each other, express emotion, and feel as if they’re part of a single community.

Wimba Live Classroom is being piloted in the DCCCD this semester. For the schedule see http://ecampus.support.dcccd.edu.