

CASE STUDY

Northwestern University School of Communication

For 125 years, the Northwestern University School of Communication (formerly the School of Speech) has provided leadership and vision in the art and science of communication. Since beginning as a single elocution course in 1878, the school has grown in scope and size, becoming one of the most respected institutions for the study of human expression and communication. The Northwestern University School of Communication offers a comprehensive program of study in the arts and sciences of communication. Undergraduate, graduate and professional students work with world-class faculty to create new under-

standings of communication and develop new approaches to improving human performance.

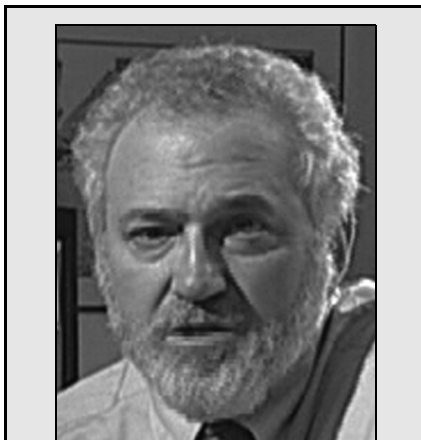
CHALLENGE

The Distributed Learning Center located within the Northwestern University School of Communication has the primary responsibility for helping faculty and students apply new interactive technologies to teaching and learning.

The purpose of the Distributed Learning Center is to research and implement the latest instructional technologies for distributed learning environments, video conferencing, video and voice over internet protocol, and peer-to-peer interactions. The Center provides a place for students in the School of Communication to work with new interactive technologies that provide a joint learning experience for both faculty and students.

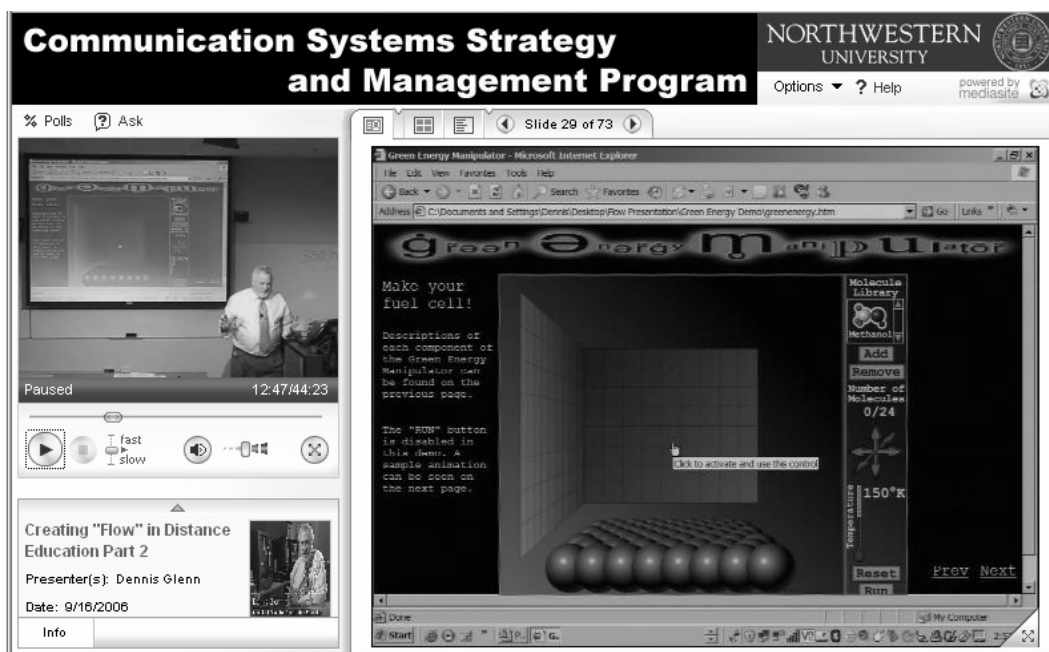
"We found that we needed to offer additional resources to continue our top-notch learning environment," says Dennis Glenn, assistant dean for distributed education at Northwestern. "Northwestern attracts the best and the brightest and as such it is our job to deliver the best education possible. We developed the Distributed Learning Center with the latest technology in mind that would allow students on campus or anywhere in the world to attend class."

With one of the nation's leading executive education programs, Northwestern was committed to offering students a solution for distance education that was



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Northwestern University delivers a classroom experience through the Mediasite Viewer interface.

dependable and convenient and easy to access. The School of Communication had many potential students who expressed interest in its programs, but because of the time and travel commitment were unable to attend courses on campus. "Northwestern was asked by companies located in the Silicon Valley to offer a distance education solution which would make it possible for their employees to attend our programs and reap the benefits of a Northwestern education," says Glenn.

SOLUTION

The Northwestern University School of Communication looked at several other systems before selecting Mediasite as the solution to launch with its graduate distance learning program.

"We wanted a live streaming solution," says Glenn. "Other companies offered some of the components we wanted, but we continued to search because we simply did not find a solution which met our very

high standards. We delayed implementing our distance program until we found a technology that would provide us with a way to deliver distance education that was equal to that of our on-campus experience."

Northwestern made the decision to offer synchronous video conferencing as a way to bring distance students into class with students who attend the on-campus courses. The determining factor was the ability to have students participate in class synchronously. The technology converged and permitted the distant students the ability to attend class with resident students. "The added benefit Mediasite provided to the program was we now could do a live stream and archive simultaneously which was a critical factor in the selection of Mediasite technology," says Glenn. The quality of viewing and archiving the courses was a key determinant for success. Northwestern was committed to embarking on the program only when a viable solution was in place. Glenn wanted to be sure that the chosen technology would be capable of

enhancing the educational value of both local students and distance learners.

In an executive education program, it is understandable that students will occasionally miss classes. Before employing Mediasite, there was nothing Northwestern could do—the students had to go to their professors and fellow students for the material. With Mediasite, students now can go directly to the source. “The local students demanded archived links to the material,” says Glenn. “We agreed that all students in the class should have access to the same materials. With Mediasite, we were able to offer both on-campus and distance students the ability to access the same material at their convenience.”

“Mediasite has taken the place of note taking and offers students a superior education because they can go straight to my lecture, watch it again and simply print off the accompanying PowerPoint. I do not allow students in my courses to take notes,” says Glenn. “If they are taking notes, then they are not listening to what I am saying. Class time should be spent asking questions and interacting between students and the professor.”

RESULT

Northwestern University is constantly evaluating new ways to use Mediasite. On

average, the university conducts 120 classroom sessions a year using Mediasite. In addition, final presentations of graduate students are captured which allows them the opportunity to review and better prepare for the graded presentation to the larger class.

Interest in Mediasite is now spreading across campus to other colleges. “When I demonstrated our current capabilities using Mediasite to the Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine—Prosthetics and Orthotics Center, they immediately saw the benefits and made the decision to utilize the technology to create a blended learning program,” says Glenn.

BENEFITS

- Allows university to offer programs to students in different geographical locations;
- Promotes classroom discussion with students able to focus on the information being exchanged rather than on note taking; and
- Extends use of technology beyond the confines of one school or department to promote interdepartmental collaboration.

“NORTHWESTERN MADE THE DECISION TO OFFER SYNCHRONOUS VIDEO CONFERENCING AS A WAY TO BRING DISTANCE STUDENTS INTO CLASS WITH STUDENTS WHO ATTEND THE ON-CAMPUS COURSES.”