THE **CENTER** FOR
TEACHING & LEARNING

The Learning Advocate

Introducing myCourses
(mycourses.msstate.edu)

In 2006, WebCT merged with Blackboard to form one company marketing the Blackboard Learning Systems product line. Vista Enterprise is the upgrade version for the university's WebCT Campus Edition license. The new version, known as myCourses, provides a more intuitive interface, enhanced tools, content sharing, and more. myCourses will take the place of the current WebCT and Blackboard systems beginning in May 2008, with the beginning of Maymester.

Migration training workshops for current WebCT users are being provided by CTL. The training dates and times, along with registration information is available at **ctl.msstate.edu** under the **Programs and Services** link.

All current WebCT users are encouraged to attend a workshop. In addition to migration workshops, CTL will offer **Introduction to myCourses** workshops designed for new users, current Blackboard users, and current WebCT users. Open lab times with migration assistance are also scheduled to provide instructors with any needed assistance migrating their course content. After the initial migration training, the CTL will offer more specific and advanced training. myCourses open lab times and registration for migration workshops are available at the CTL Web site. A preview of the new and enhanced features of myCourses is available at **www.ctl.msstate.edu/technologies/mycourses/**.

After the migration of External and Academic WebCT, WebCT CE 4.1 will be taken out of production. The current Blackboard system is also being taken out of production. Courses housed in any instance for the current WebCT (Academic, External and Development) will no longer be available. Instructors are responsible for the migration of their entire course content into myCourses.

CURRENT BLACKBOARD USERS: Blackboard courses will not migrate into myCourses and will have to be built using the myCourses tools.

Mississippi State UNIVERSITY ™

MY**COURSES**

SPRING 2008

From the Director's Desk

The Center for Teaching and Learning has entered its third year and continues to grow in terms of services and offerings. The Fall 2007 Semester saw very successful implementations of eInstruction and Turnitin.com. Roughly 50 courses have integrated eInstruction's clicker system during the year, while over 120 instructors are using Turnitin.com to check the originality of students' work. The Center developed documentation for these systems and continues to provide training and support. Please contact us if you need to know more about either of these teaching tools.

The Center has also been tasked by the Office of the Provost to help coordinate First-Year Experience programs at Mississippi State University. The first year at college is a significant milestone in a student's life. First-Year Experience programs are designed to help with the transition into the academic culture of the university. First-year seminars and learning communities are two key components of the First-Year Experience being coordinated by the Center. Please see the article on page 5 for more details.

A primary goal of the Center is to help focus efforts across campus aimed at improving teaching and learning. To this end, the Center and the Division of Academic Outreach and Continuing Education (AOCE) are collaborating on a number of activities in the area of distance education. So far this year, the Center and AOCE have planned and conducted a number of Brown Bags and Lunch N Learns that focused on quality teaching at a distance. Additionally, the two organizations are currently in the planning stages of a 2-day workshop that will focus on being a distance education instructor. Please be on the look out for more information on this program as well as other joint efforts between the Center and AOCE.

Finally, the Center has been very busy working in conjunction with Information Technology Services (ITS) to upgrade the current version of WebCT to Blackboard Learning System - Vista Enterprise License which will be known at MSU as myCourses. All Independent Study Courses were migrated to myCourses at the beginning of the Spring 2008 semester. The rest of the courses on External WebCT will be migrated by instructors during the Spring 2008 semester. With the beginning of the 2008 Maymester, all academic courses will be taught using myCourses. Migration training and support will be offered during the rest of the spring as well as the summer. If you are planning on using myCourses for any summer school session (including Maymester) please register for a session. Also, it is advisable to start migrating your Fall courses as soon as you can. Please watch for further information and announcements.

As always, the Center is here to help you further your teaching and your students' learning. If there is anything we can do to help you accomplish this, please do not hesitate to contact me at raven@ctl.msstate.edu or 662.325.9604.

Director

eInstruction Implementation Continues

Since the adoption of eInstruction as the standard MSU audience response system, there has been an increase in the number of clickers on campus. Fall 2007 was the first semester that eInstruction was the MSU standard and integrated into courses. There were 52 documented courses that used eInstruction, with the smallest class having four students and the largest having 257 students with registered clickers. Since the summer of 2007, the Center for Teaching and Learning has distributed over 80 teacher kits to instructors with interest continuing to grow. The teacher kits are free to instructors planning to use the system in their course. Each kit contains a clicker, registration code, and receiver.

The eInstruction audience response system allows instructors to pose questions to the class and in turn the students use their clicker to answer the question. The questions can range from true/false, multiple choice to numeric answers, and can be at either low or high levels of cognition. Instructors are also able to use eInstruction to quickly take attendance, give a quiz, or simply gauge the students understanding of course material.

Students are required to purchase their clicker and pay a registration fee; however, they will be able to use their clicker for as long as they are at MSU. The clicker (hardware) costs approximately $22 from the Barnes and Noble at Mississippi State Bookstore. eInstruction has two registration payment options which includes the one-time purchase of a lifetime registration code for $35 or alternatively, $13 per semester until the cost reasches $39 (three semesters). This gives students some flexibility in registration payments. For more information or questions, please contact The Center for Teaching and Learning at 325-1403 or help@ctl.msstate.edu.

myMedia Podcast System

The current podcast system is being upgraded to myMedia. myMedia allows instructors to continue podcasting with ease, as well as, provides them a place to store large media files for their courses. Additionally, myMedia will be integrated with myBanner, allowing faculty to mark their courses to be placed in the system. myMedia will be released in conjunction with myCourses in May 2008. The Center for Teaching and Learning will provide training sessions on the new system in May 2008. Training notifications will be sent to faculty with specific times and dates. Visit **ctl.msstate.edu** for updated information.

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Technology Classroom Enhancements

Recurring funding has been established for renewal and replacement of the technology installed in a number of classrooms as part of the Provost's classroom technology project. This funding will also allow two new rooms to be added each year. The Information Technology Advisory Committee (ITAC) has been tasked by the Provost's Offic to select which rooms are upgraded. The two new rooms to be added this spring are 111 McCool and 1144 Hand Lab.

Improvements being made to existing classrooms this spring/summer include:

- upgrading all podium computers with faster processors and more memory
- upgrading software on all podium computers
- upgrading document cameras in 13 rooms
- enhancing 15 rooms to be podcast-ready

Training and classroom support is available through the Center for Teaching and Learning located at 2205 Mitchell Memorial Library. To make an appointment, call 325-1403. For technical support with the equipment, call the ITS Help Desk. If this is during scheduled class time, ask for emergency assistance. For more information regarding the Classroom Technology Project go to **www.its.msstate.edu/Information/classroom/**.

Turnitin.com @ MSU

Teaching faculty and instructors at Mississippi State University have access to a powerful anti-plagiarism tool in the form of Turnitin.com. Purchased through the Office of Student Affairs, Turnitin allows faculty to evaluate any text-based assignment for plagiarism. Turnitin uses a patented three-database approach to evaluating text assignments and papers. Each entry can be evaluated against an archived image of the Internet, against a commercial suite of full-text research databases, and against a proprietary database composed of students papers previously submitted to Turnitin.

Currently, there are over 120 active MSU instructor accounts and over 8000 papers have been submitted since last August. Thirty MSU departments are currently using the service. The Center for Teaching and Learning provides training support for faculty use of Turnitin. Check out the Center's website for documentation, faculty user guides, and training videos. Use of the system begins with the establishment of an active account via a request form supported by Information Technology Services (ITS). The form is available online at: **https://ssl.msstate.edu/virtual/its/turnitin/**.

Departments can set up a training session for a group of faculty by contacting Dr. Deborah Lee at 325-0810 or dlee@ctl.msstate.edu.

First-Year Experience Programs

A student's first year at college is critical in terms of becoming a productive and successful university citizen. For more than a quarter of a century educators have developed and institutionalized efforts to help first-year students succeed. Research indicates that getting students quickly connected with the university helps their success as college students. Some of the efforts that have proven successful include first-year seminars, learning communities, summer reading programs, capstone courses, and service learning.

The Provost has tasked the Center for Teaching and Learning to help coordinate First-Year Experience efforts on campus with initial focus on first-year seminars and learning communities. Furthermore, the Provost has appointed Dr. Tom Carskadon, a long-time advocate of First-Year Experience, as Director of First-Year Experience within the Center for Teaching and Learning.

First-year seminars are used by a multitude of schools (e.g., University of North Carolina, University of Georgia, Penn State, Dartmouth) to foster success in first-year students. Common traits among first-year seminar programs are small class sizes (20-25 students), faculty with an interest in first-year students, and topics that quickly draw students into their discipline. The goal is to build toward 20 First-year seminars with a total enrollment of 500 students (25 students per seminar) per semester.

First-Year Seminars provide first-year students with a special opportunity to become engaged in the excitement of a specific discipline and the intellectual stimulation of the academic culture at Mississippi State University. First-year seminars meet once a week and are taught by skilled faculty who focus on topics of special interest to research and teaching in their discipline. First-year seminars explore an eclectic array of topics and are offered fall and spring semesters. Students can earn one hour of credit towards graduation on their transcript and are only allowed to enroll in one seminar at a time.

Another area of First-Year Experience initiatives is special learning communities for incoming students. Here, first-year students will live in the same residence hall and take a section of a small core-curriculum course together, such as Public Speaking, English Composition, etc. If you are scheduled to teach an appropriately sized (20-25 student) section of a core curriculum course in the fall and would like to be part of this program, please contact either Dr. Raven or Dr. Carskadon for more details.

1ST 365

Mississippi State University
FYE: First Year Experience

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Introducing myCourses

myCourses offers new and enhanced features of the old WebCT version. The table below is just a preview of what myCourses has to offer.

Tool	What's Different
Assessment: Question Types	Three new question types added to the ones already available. They are jumbled sentence, fill in blank, and combination.
Assessment	Calendar entries can be created automatically to inform students of an assessment date.
Announcement	New feature that allows faculty to deliver important information to course and section member students instantaneoulsy.
Chat	Chat and Whiteboard tools have been combined to offer a better system with more features. More chat rooms are now available per class.
Grade Book	There is now a split screen design that allows you to scroll left or right while never losing the student's first and last name.
Group Tools	You create groups using the Group Manager tool. All groups that you create can be used across various activities and content.
Discussions	More enhanced features such as making the topic editable and gradable. Additionally two new topics types are available Blog and Journal.

Planning to use myCourses?

Academic myCourses

If you are planning to use myCourses for Summer or Fall semester, it is your responsibility to flag the course in myBanner. Summer and Fall courses can be flagged now.

External/Devel myCourses

If you are planning to External or Devel myCourses, you must request the course be created at: **ssl2.msstate.edu/its/mycourses/index.php**
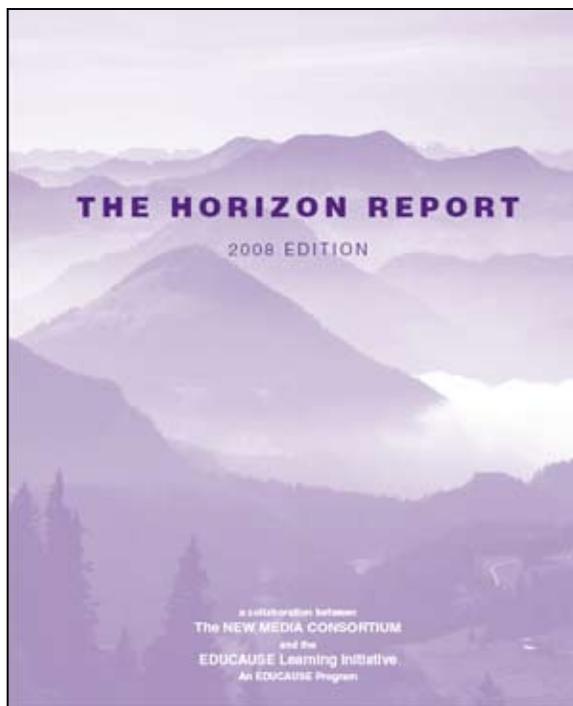
From the Bookshelf….

This issue's focus is the 2008 Horizon Report, produced jointly by the New Media Consortium (NMC) and the EDUCAUSE Learning Initiative (ELI). This is the fifth edition of the report and, as with previous editions, the focus is on the identification of emerging technologies that are predicted to have a large impact on teaching and learning within the university. The report is available for free at: **http://www.nmc.org/pdf/2008-Horizon-Report.pdf.**

This year's report identifies six key emerging technologies. They are: grassroots video (produced with cell phones or free software), collaboration Web applications (such as Flickr, Facebook, or Twitter), mobile broadband applications, data mashups (custom applications built from data derived from multiple sources - examples include Google Earth and Google Maps), collective intelligence (including the application of cloud tagging and collaborative projects such as Wikipedia), and social operating systems. For each trend, the report provides a general definition, applications to the teaching and learning environment, links to example projects, and a bibliography providing additional information.

This year's report also identified seven "metatrends" that have emerged from the past five years. These include "the evolving approaches to communication between humans and machines; the collective sharing and generation of knowledge, computing in three dimensions; connecting people via the network; games as pedagogical platforms; the shifting of content production to users; and the evolution of a ubiquitous platform" (page 7).

Each year *The Horizon Report* is an interesting read for anyone curious about the changing state of instructional technology. The inclusion of concrete examples and projects helps the reader relate the technology to his or her own research and teaching areas. To recommend a future bookshelf title, contact Dr. Deborah Lee at dlee@ctl.msstate.edu.

THE HORIZON REPORT
2008 EDITION

a collaboration between
The NEW MEDIA CONSORTIUM
and the
EDUCAUSE Learning Initiative
An EDUCAUSE Program

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Center Happenings

Seminars:

The Center for Teaching and Learning is offering one hour teaching and learning workshops this spring. The seminars are held in the ITS Etheredge Conference Room on the third floor of Etheredge Hall in room 336. The remaining seminars are listed below:

March 27, 2008	**State of the Art in Cheating**
April 3, 2008	**Incorporating Service-Learning**

Brown Bags:

The Center for Teaching and Learning offers three Brown Bag sessions each semester. The Brown Bag sessions cover timely topics related to teaching and learning at MSU. Each session consists of a distinguished panel that are experts on the topic. The attendees are served a light lunch (while it lasts) during the event. The remaining Spring 2008 Brown Bag session date and topic is:

April 9, 2008	**WebCT Upgrade: Introducing myCourses**

The Brown Bag session are held in King Seminar Room on the first floor of McCain Hall. The sessions are scheduled from noon to 1:00 with networking and lunch beginning at 11:30.

Grisham Master Teacher Series

The Spring 2008 Grisham Master Teacher Series is scheduled for April 4, 2008 at 1:00 p.m. in the Grisham Room on the third floor of Mitchell Memorial Library. Funded by the author John Grisham, the Grisham Master Teacher awards began in 1993 and recognize excellence in teaching. Our speaker, Dr. Robert Reese is the 2007 Grisham Master Teacher and an Associate Professor in Electrical and Computer Engineering. A reception will follow his presentation.

> **Registration is encouraged for all of the events listed.**
> **For more information to register, please visit ctl.msstate.edu.**