

# Enhancing online delivery beyond PowerPoint

**Ruby Evans**  
**Iris Champion**

*Dr. Evans is the Executive Director and Senior Consultant for Academic Consulting Exchange in Tallahassee, Florida.*

*Dr. Champion is an E-Faculty Trainer and Associate Professor of Computer Science at Southern University at Shreveport, Louisiana.*

*Guidance and verbal directions, usually received in a face-to-face (F2F) classroom, are often conspicuously absent from online courses. Like their peers in traditional classroom settings, students in online classes need clear, concise instructions (Cramer, Collins, Snider, & Fawcett, 2006). Screen capture and recording technologies, such as Camtasia and SnagIt, add a twist to instruction that can bring new life to online courses. These tools—which support screen capture, recording, and editing—help online instructors communicate more clearly by creating engaging and professional presentations (Smith & Smith, 2007; Speed & Hardin, 2001). In brief, instructional planning + electronic media = excellent instructional delivery.*

## Introduction

In 2002, the League for Innovation in the Community College reported that 86 percent of surveyed community college leaders deemed technological literacy essential for students to succeed in the twenty-first century (ERIC Clearinghouse for Community Colleges, 2002). Scholars agreed, boldly proclaiming that e-learning, combined with effective pedagogy and reflective teaching, has the potential to continually change higher education (Garrison, Anderson, & Garrison, 2004; Evans, 2004). Crucial to the transformation (Russo, 2001), Web-based instruction offers an increasingly popular alternative to traditional and face-to-face (F2F) classroom teaching and learning.

---

In today's new knowledge economy, educators and students alike have demonstrated a marked interest in uncharted territories of cyberspace by exploring them—wherever and whenever, asynchronously. Growing numbers of professionals who cannot take a hiatus or commute to a college or university campus demand e-learning (Evans, 2004b). Levy (2003) has declared, “We are now in the information age where many aspects of our environment, especially in education, are moving online.”

Accordingly, technology has changed the way institutions of higher education, in general, and community colleges, in particular, deliver instruction (Plotnik, 1999). Non-traditional and adult learners, who often attend community colleges, demand equity and unlimited access to quality learning-centered instruction (Evans, 2003; Lever-Duffy & Lemke, 1996; Thach, 1993); and they want courses that effectively integrate their life responsibilities and busy schedules (Howell, Williams, and Lindsay, 2003). Students are choosing to attend the institutions that are most responsive to their needs.

In many ways, then, technology has become the great equalizer as the Internet helps increase communication among faculty, students, and staff (Hancock,

2001). Floyd (2003) and Kozeracki (1999) assert that digital communication technologies continue to expand teaching and learning environments beyond traditional F2F modes. Because of the expansion, “The current higher education infrastructure cannot accommodate the growing college-aged population and enrollments, making more distance education programs necessary” (Howell et al., 2003, para. 6).

## **A case study: Southern University at Shreveport**

### **History and mission**

Southern University at Shreveport Louisiana (SUSLA), a two-year comprehensive community college, operates as an autonomous unit of the only historically black, 1890 Land Grant University System in the United States—the Southern University System, Baton Rouge, Louisiana. SUSLA was created by Act 42 of the ordinary session of the Louisiana Legislature on May 11, 1964.

The institution began offering classes on September 19, 1967. Curricular offerings are designed for a number of purposes and functions: college transfer, workforce development, community education, continuing education, and lifelong learning. Currently,

---

SUSLA offers no upper undergraduate or graduate-level courses and maintains open admissions. The institution also works closely with high schools in its region by establishing dual enrollment opportunities that increase the upward mobility of the area students. As a comprehensive community college within the Southern University System, SUSLA's mission is multidimensional:

- *Developmental education*  
Instructional foundation programs designed to prepare individuals for admission to an occupational-technical curriculum or to a university parallel college transfer curriculum;
- *Transfer curriculum*  
University parallel college transfer programs designed to meet the requirements for the lower division of four-year college and university programs;
- *Technical/Occupational education*  
One-, two- and possibly three-year career programs designed to meet the demand for technicians, semi-professional workers, and skilled craftsmen for employment in industry, business, the professions, and government, including associate degrees in the arts, sciences, applied sciences, as well as diploma and certificate programs;
- *Continuing education*  
Programs carefully designed to meet the lifelong needs of the community, whether for college transfer credit, associate degree

credit, occupational upgrading, personal satisfaction, or experiences necessary for a change in vocation.

## **Demographics and institutional policy**

SUSLA serves a student population (80 percent Black, 70 percent female, 30 percent male) that has increased significantly in recent years from 1,925 students in fall 2002 to 2,534 in fall 2005. The institution employs more than 175 faculty in varying capacities: full-time, part-time, or adjunct. The percentage of minority enrollment at the institution has consistently ranged from 80 to 90 percent, with the majority being first-generation college students from low-income families. Public service activities emphasize the needs of the institution's service district; help raise the level of education for citizens of the Shreveport and Bossier City areas, in particular; and enhance the quality of life for the citizens of Northwest Louisiana, in general.

The university uses an open enrollment policy to ensure equity in access, both in academic readiness and in cultural background. As an open admissions institution of higher learning, SUSLA also uses the American College Test (ACT) to provide information helpful in admission and matriculation. Students who

---

score below 18 in English, reading, or mathematics are advised to enroll in academic enhancement or remediation courses.

Approximately 40 percent of incoming students in the sciences are recommended for developmental courses. Roughly, 65 percent of incoming students receive grade equivalent scores below 70 on the Stanford Test of Academic Skills (TASK) in reading, English, and mathematics. Students originate from the under-developed areas of Shreveport (population 301,400) and from surrounding areas of northeast Louisiana, southwest Arkansas, and northeast Texas.

SUSLA lists the following among its broad academic goals and desired student learning outcomes: computer/technical literacy; critical thinking skills; effective communication skills; ethics and integrity; group interaction and teambuilding skills; information literacy skills; leadership skills; multicultural and global awareness.

Accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS), SUSLA currently offers twenty-three (23) associate degree programs and nine (9) certificate programs. SUSLA will be evaluated for reaffirmation of its accreditation in 2011.

## Online education

Recently, The Sloan Consortium, A Consortium of Institutions and Organizations Committed to Quality Online Education, reported that nearly 3.2 million students took at least one online course during the fall 2005 term, a substantial increase over the 2.3 million for the previous year (Allen & Seaman, 2005; also see <http://www.sloanc.org/publications/survey/survey06.asp>). Sloan-C noted further that "There has been no leveling of the growth rate of online enrollments; institutions of higher education report record online enrollment growth on both a numeric and a percentage basis." Such findings strongly indicate that online instructional delivery, combined with effective pedagogy and reflective teaching, has transformed higher education.

Hiltz and Goldman (2004) describe typical successful online students as well-organized, disciplined, focused, self-directed, self-motivated, independent, and autonomous learners; as critical thinkers; as time managers; as possible non-kinesthetic learners; as masters of technological tools; and as academically and socially mature individuals. Equally important, like their peers in a F2F classroom, online learners need guidance and verbal directions, but both are often conspicuously absent from online courses.

---

## Equity in online instruction

For the most part, instructors distinguish between F2F instruction and online instruction. Debate persists regarding the existence of significant differences in these environments (Lin & Overbaugh, 2007). The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS), which accredits SUSLA, requires that online courses provide a learning experience equivalent to that afforded students taking traditional lecture courses (Commission on Colleges, 2003, 2000). However, Taylor (2002) cautions: “Using the Internet as a mode of delivery will not automatically improve student learning.” Incorporating multimedia into online course instruction can supplement the requisite structure and detail that are often inherent in the traditional classroom. In a study of 199 online learners, Young (2006) reported using meaningful examples and communicating effectively among those factors indicative of effective online teaching.

To date, one of the most common methods of enhancing online courses has been the use of PowerPoint. Typically, these presentations add some meaningful graphics to help explain topics of instruction. Faculty may also choose to embed lectures within PowerPoint presentations.

SUSLA began an online certification program for facilitators of electronic instruction. As a means of quality control, this rigorous program combines theory and application and has these goals:

- To introduce faculty to requirements for developing and maintaining unification among courses within the world of distance education.
- To provide faculty with tools and techniques for developing a course to be taught online via Blackboard.
- To encourage faculty satisfaction in teaching online courses by building a knowledge base for Blackboard use and allowing course creativity with design, assignments, and assessments.

At the end of the training, instructors are required to produce a complete, fully developed online course. Those courses developed through the training program have been piloted, and feedback from faculty and learners is positive. SUSLA has endeavored to produce online courses that offer a quality learning experience for students and that simultaneously comply with Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) guidelines and best practices. Although students are now being dubbed the Net Generation (Oblinger & Oblinger, 2005) many SUSLA

---

students still gain access to the Web in the home setting through dial-up. Depending on student access (e.g., dial-up), the communication link may “timeout” or “drop,” causing the student to have to re-connect to the Internet. Time lost in attempting to download instructional supplements can prove both daunting and frustrating to learners online. For these students at SUSLA, dial-up access compromises their ability to receive recorded lecture vignettes as attachments through E-forums. A better way was needed, and the institution believes that it has found one such way.

### **Camtasia: a better fit**

SUSLA chose a popular software package used for education and training: Camtasia with SnagIt. With reference to its use, Mark (2004) stated the following:

Using products like Camtasia Studio...can provide a personalized component to your online instruction that until recently was essentially unattainable. While there are limitations, and while the user must be careful, this mechanism can bring the student and teacher together across the miles, creating a kind of cyber-synergism.

In F2F classes, some researchers have argued, the instructor has an advantage in capturing and

holding student interest due to human touch and real-time interaction. Multimedia technologies, such as Camtasia and SnagIt, can bring this semblance of real-time, real-life instruction to the virtual world, affording online students a similar learning experience to that of their F2F counterparts.

Camtasia supports the creation of PowerPoint presentations with embedded lectures, along with live screen capture recordings (screen shots). The software also permits inclusion of video clips, such as instructions, and supports stand-alone voice narrations that can be used to increase the effectiveness of e-learning. In addition, the software helps to decrease the cost, the complexity, and the requisite time needed to create a presentation. Camtasia presentations are highly compressed files that can be placed on a server where students can download and review them at their convenience (online) (Peram, 2006). The software enables facilitators to keep pace with an increasingly mobile world by publishing videos and MP3 files for iPod downloading.

### **SnagIt**

Before Camtasia came into existence, to mix screen shots with text, users might follow these familiar steps:

- 
- Press “Print Screen” button
  - Open a Word (or its equivalent) document
  - Paste the screen shot into the open document
  - Insert a few descriptive sentences to explain the screen shot
  - Repeat process until desired systematic procedure is accomplished.

Invariably, the user would then attach the saved file to Blackboard or some other Web-teaching tool for immediate access. In looking at the systematic instructions created by using “Print Screen” combined with text, students complained that the file was often too large and required an inordinate amount of download time, particularly for those using dial-up. The reason for the extended load time was the digitized images included in the print screen function. TechSmith’s SnagIt allows for screen capturing and image editing. SnagIt will capture just the image users want without the digitized background of the computer desktop.

SnagIt has a powerful built-in editor that allows users to crop images. Because SnagIt files compress unnecessary extras, less downloading is required. Images can be inserted into PowerPoint, Word, or other desired applications. Additionally, images can be resized, color schemes can be

adjusted, and text can be added to enhance student understanding of concepts. Incorporating callouts (bubbles with text) and text descriptions can make any systematic instruction easier to understand and more interesting to students. The guidance and verbal directions, usually received in a F2F classroom, are often conspicuously absent from online courses. New multimedia applications, such as Camtasia and SnagIt, can add clear, concise instructions that students need.

### **The external factor: accreditation**

Finally, one distinguishing factor, when examining online courses, is the institution’s accrediting body. Standards of accreditation for online learning degree programs can be extremely rigid—and purposely designed to ensure quality: in faculty, in teaching and learning, and in graduates. Accrediting bodies continue to modify expectations and hold institutions, particularly their online entities, to increasingly higher standards regarding the product deliverable—a knowledgeable graduate.

Many institutions—some more reactive than proactive—are providing more substantive training and professional development for faculty who teach in online

---

settings. Online facilitators of instruction often represent the student's most frequent point of contact in the educational experience. As such, institutions are becoming increasingly aware that indicators of quality must extend beyond faculty credentials. Accordingly, institutions must provide faculty with continuous opportunities for professional development and exposure to evolving technologies and related software (e.g., Camtasia and SnagIt).

## Conclusion

Online learning is not the future nor is it passé. It is a present, viable form of instruction. As such, projections are that the number of online learners and courses will continue to increase. The accreditation process will, in turn, play a key role in the ongoing discussion of the merits and quality of online instruction. Offering benefits of convenience, independence, and even improved academic performance (Stark-

man, 2007), online teaching and learning promise to be here for the long haul. Technologies, such as Camtasia and SnagIt, add a twist to instruction that can bring new life to online courses. These tools—which support screen capture, recording, and editing—help online instructors communicate more clearly and create engaging, professional presentations.

Camtasia and SnagIt allow online instructors to incorporate audio and video in preparing “mini-lessons” that provide explanation and expansion of topics and ideas (Mark, 2004). Further, these technologies reduce download time, thereby placing students on equal footing with respect to presentation accessibility. In brief, instructional planning + electronic media = excellent instructional delivery. For Southern University at Shreveport Louisiana and the students it serves, the equation posits a winning formula for student success.



---

## References

- Allen, I., & Seaman, J. (2005, November). *Growing by degrees: Online education in the United States*. Retrieved October 13, 2007, from [http://www.sloan-c.org/resources/growing\\_by\\_degrees.pdf](http://www.sloan-c.org/resources/growing_by_degrees.pdf)
- Cohen, A. & Brawer, F. (1996). *The American community college*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Commission on Colleges. Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. (2003). *Distance education policy statement*. Decatur, GA: Author.
- Commission on Colleges. Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. (2000). *Best practices for electronically offered degree and certificate programs*. Decatur, GA: Author.
- Cramer, K. M., Collins, C. R., Snider, D., & Fawcett, G. (2006). Virtual lecture hall for in-class and online sections: A comparison of utilization, perceptions, and benefits. *Journal of Research on Technology in Education*, 38(4), 371-81.
- Cox, C. (2004). From cameras to Camtasia: Streaming media without the stress. *Internet Reference Services Quarterly: A journal of innovative information practice, technologies, and resources*, 9(3/4), 193-200.
- ERIC Clearinghouse for Community Colleges. EDINFO, No. 2002-01. Los Angeles, CA: University of California.
- Evans, R. (2004). [Review of the book *E-learning in the 21st Century: A framework for research and practice*]. *Teachers College Record*, 108, 6.
- Evans, R. (2004b). Preparing to teach online. *Academic Exchange Quarterly, winter issue*, 8(4).
- Evans, R. (2003). UCF's community college program: Integrating teaching, learning, and technology. Proceedings of the Distance Learning Administration Conference, USA, Fourth annual.
- Floyd, D.L. (2003). Distance learning in community colleges: Leadership challenges for change and development. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice*, 27(4), 337-347.
- Gabriel, M. (2004). Learning together: Exploring group interactions online. *Journal of Distance Education*, 19(1), 54-72.
- Garrison, D. R., Anderson, T., & Garrison, R. (2003). *E-learning in the 21st century: A framework for research and practice*. New York: Routledge.
- Hancock, A. (2001). Technology: The great equalizer. *Community College Journal*, 72(2), 17-21.
- Hiltz, S. R., & Goldman, R. (2004). *Learning Together Online: Research on Asynchronous Learning Networks*. Mahway, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.
- Kozeracki, C. A. (1999). Scratching the surface: Distance education in community colleges. *New Directions for Community Colleges*, 108, 89-98.

- 
- Lever-Duffy, J. & Lemke, R. A. (1996). Distance education in the community college. *Leadership Abstract*, 9(11). Phoenix, AZ: League for Innovation in the Community College. Retrieved April 6, 2005, from <http://www.league.org/publication/abstracts/leadership/labs1196.htm>
- Levy, S. (2003). Six factors to consider when planning online distance learning programs in higher education. *Online Journal of Distance Learning Administration*, 6(1). Retrieved June 1, 2007, from <http://www.westga.edu/~distance/ojdla/spring61/levy61.htm>
- Lin, S. Y., & Overbaugh, R. C. (2007). The effect of student choice of online discussion format on tiered achievement. *Journal of Research on Technology in Education*, 39(4), 399-415.
- Mark, S. (2004). Personalizing the online classroom using Tech-Smith's Camtasia or Microsoft's Windows Media Encoder. *Online Classroom*, 11, 4-5.
- Oblinger, D., & Oblinger, J. (2005). Educating the Net Generation. *Educause*. Available online at: <http://www.educause.edu/ir/library/pdf/pub7101.pdf>
- Perram, John (2005). *The International Journal for Technology in Mathematics Education*, Press Release.
- Plotnik, E. (1999). *Information Literacy*. Syracuse NY: Clearinghouse on Information and technology. (ERIC Document reproduction service NO. ED427777).
- Russo, A. (2001). E-learning everywhere: The growth of E-learning. *School Administrator*.
- Smith, L. A. & Smith, E. T. (2007). Using Camtasia to develop and enhance online learning: Tutorial presentation. *Journal of Computing Sciences in Colleges*, 22(5), 121-22.
- Speed, F. M. & Hardin, J. (2001). Teaching statistics via distance: Duplicating the classroom experience. *Communications in Statistics - Simulation and Computation*, 30(2), 391 - 402.
- Starkman, N. (2007). Going the distance. *T. H. E. Journal*, 34(2), 18-20, 22, 24.
- Taylor, J. C. (2002). Teaching and learning online: The workers, the lurkers, and the shirkers. Paper presented at the 2002 Conference on Research in Distance & Adult Learning in Asia. Retrieved February 20, 2006, from <http://www.ouhk.edu.hk/CRIDAL/cridala2002/speeches/taylor.pdf>
- Thach, L. (1993). Exploring the role of the deliverer in distance education. *Journal of Instructional Media*, 20(4), 289-307.
- Young, S. (2006). Student views of effective online teaching in higher education. *The American Journal of Distance Education*, 20(20), 65-77.
- Zhang, D., Zhao, J. L., Zhou, L., Nunamaker, J. F., Jr. (2004, May). Can E-learning replace classroom learning? *Communications of the Association for Computing Machinery*, 47(5), 75-79.

**Copyright of *The Community College Enterprise* is the property of Schoolcraft College, and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted on a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.**