



Instructors of the Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing at Bloomsburg University win USDLA Teaching Award for their Accessible Classes via Wimba

"We're the only people in world we know of who have a fully online class that is taught synchronously, where I lecture and all my words are coming out of an interpreter's hands or through captioning."

-Dr. Samuel Slike, Professor and Curriculum Coordinator of the Education of the Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing Program, Bloomsburg University Computer Information Technology, Ivy Tech Community College

Nestled along the eastern edge of central Pennsylvania's Appalachian Mountains, Bloomsburg University is one of 14 liberal arts colleges of Pennsylvania's State System of Higher Education. Founded in 1839 as the "Bloomsburg Literary Institute," the university is a comprehensive master's institution with an enrollment of 7,900 undergraduate and 800 graduate students, most from the eastern half of the state.

While faculty and students at Bloomsburg have received numerous accolades in the forms of awards, national rankings and professional accreditations which serve as testimony to the excellence of its academic programs, one particular award in 2008 has garnered arguably the most acclaim for the institution.

Dr. Samuel Slike, Professor and Curriculum Coordinator of the Education of the Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing Program, and Pamela Berman, an instructional designer and developer at the Institute for Interactive Technologies and an adjunct faculty member for the Department of Instructional Technology, lead teacher training

classes during which prospective classroom and itinerant teachers of deaf and hard-of-hearing students are provided with an eclectic background of coursework and experiences in the field. And though teaching to hard-of-hearing students is hardly unusual in and of itself, they way Dr. Slike and Berman teach their class – entirely live online via Wimba Classroom – is so novel that it won one of the most prestigious teaching awards in the country.

Dr. Slike and Berman use Wimba Classroom to teach live online to their students. However, besides showing PowerPoint slides and interacting via chat and voice like most instructors do via a virtual classroom, they incorporate a number of innovative accessibility features using a variety of learning technologies. Wimba Classroom enables students to access a sign-language interpreter and closed-caption text to accompany the standard slide presentation and instructor's voice. Other learning technologies include a Sorenson Video Phone for facilitating real-time visual interaction between interpreters and deaf students, replacing



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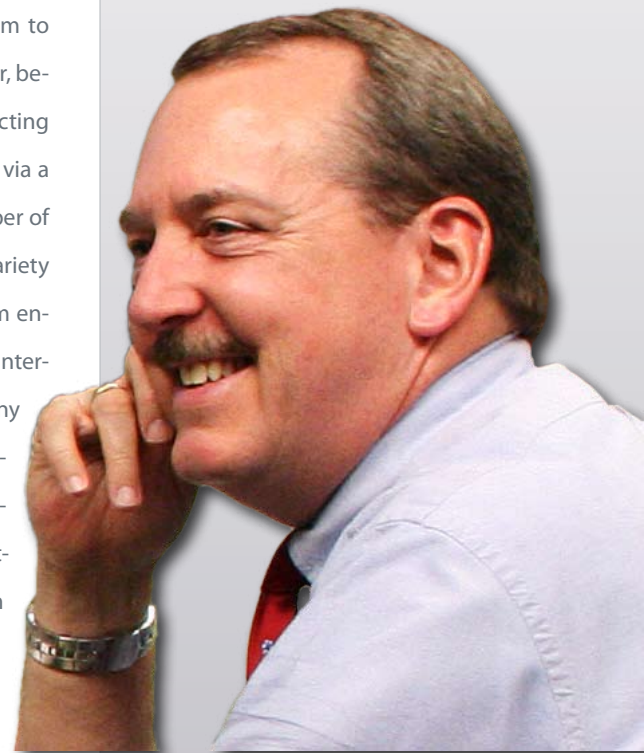
WIMBA PRODUCTS AND SERVICES

- Wimba Classroom

KEY BENEFITS

- Offer accessible live online classes via closed-captioning and interpreters
- Meet accessibility standards
- Won 2008 United States Distance Learning Association award

Dr. Samuel Slike, Professor and Curriculum Coordinator of the Education of the Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing Program, Bloomsburg University





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WHAT THEY'RE SAYING

"As a premier organization for the entire distance learning profession, we are honoring Bloomsburg University as a leader in the industry. The work of Samuel Slike and Pamela Berman has raised the bar of excellence and we are truly honored by their contributions to the distance learning industry."

-Dr. John G. Flores, CEO, United States Distance Learning Association

ABOUT WIMBA

Wimba develops web-based collaboration software designed for online education, language learning and live interactive communications. Our collaborative applications enable learning professionals to fully embrace the new wave of teaching and learning opportunities afforded by the Internet; regardless of geographic location, bandwidth or operating system. Our classroom collaboration solutions enable educators to conduct live, online classes, meetings, office hours and other collaborations, and our language learning tools add oral interaction directly into course content, web-pages, study groups and assessments. With simplicity and power, Wimba adds new dimensions to online, accessible education, enhancing the learning experience for both students and instructors.

the need to communicate via text chat, a much slower form of interaction.

"We're the only people in world we know of who have a fully online class that is taught synchronously, where I lecture and all my words are coming out of an interpreter's hands or through captioning," says Dr. Slike.

In the Spring of 2008, the United States Distance Learning Association awarded Dr. Slike and Berman its award for Best Practices for Distance Learning Programming - Online Technology in Higher Education for their work. They're the only two persons in the world who regularly use such a unique combination of accessible technologies in all of their live online classes.

"As a premier organization for the entire distance learning profession, we are honoring Bloomsburg University as a leader in the industry," said Dr. John G. Flores, CEO of USDLA. "The work of Samuel Slike and Pamela Berman has raised the bar of excellence and we're truly honored by their contributions to the distance learning industry."

This course first launched in the fall of 2006 as an online course fully accessible to deaf and hard-of-hearing persons titled "History, Education, and Guidance of the Deaf/Hard of Hearing." Offered at a distance, its convenient nature helps all learners. Thus far, Dr. Slike and Berman have taught 45 students, four of whom were deaf and one on whom was hard-of-hearing. Though most students were scattered throughout the state, one student took the course from Hawaii.

"I worked full time and it was impossible for me to attend the class in person with my schedule. I live far from the university and would not have

been able to take this course had it only been offered on campus," says another former student, Jillian Forschner. "As a deaf professional, these additions to the online course are exceptional and without them I would not have full access to what is being offered."

Students enrolled in the course gain an understanding of basic challenges, principles and practices related to educating people who are deaf/hard-of-hearing. Topics include:

- Incidence, definitions and classifications of hearing loss;
- History of the education of deaf/hard-of-hearing students;
- Present educational methods, philosophies and programs and
- Social and psychological aspects of deafness.

The primary instructional goal of this course is to expand access and better prepare future teachers of the deaf/hard-of-hearing. The fully accessible online course can be taken by students located across the United States which can potentially increase the enrollment of teachers who will continue on to graduate program in Education of the Deaf/Hard-of-Hearing.

"Who would have thought that technology could take such an astounding step in advancing our educational system?" says student Kelly Klinedinst. "Not only was I studying about deaf history and culture, but I was provided the chance to learn and grow with two simple tools, a computer and headset. Rushing to class and fighting the chilly weather was of no need for this course for it was conveniently located at the very location I spend much of my time, my computer desk."