Wimba
people teach people

BOSTON UNIVERSITY

Boston University
Boston, MA
www.bu.edu

WIMBA PRODUCTS AND SERVICES

- Wimba Classroom
- Wimba Voice

KEY BENEFITS

- Increase engagement of students in fully online courses
- Increase communication across a wide spectrum of degrees
- Integration with CMS for ease-of-use

Wimba is Foundation for 10 Fully Online Degree & 10 Online Certificate Programs at Lofty Boston University

"Wimba has been a real enhancement to our online program and students are really connecting with one another."
-Eldon Strickland, Associate Director, Office of Distance Education, Boston University

Located in the heart of Boston, Boston University (BU) is the fourth largest private university in the United States, yet prior to 2000 it had no online courses. Upon quickly developing a full breadth of asynchronous online course offerings that operated via the then WebCT course management system, in 2002 BU began offering some of its courses live online via Wimba Classroom in order to add a livelier element to its online courses.

Now, in 2009, BU offers 10 fully online degree programs and 10 online certificates in a variety of disciplines ranging from criminal justice and computer science, to health communication, music education, and occupational therapy.

The move to Wimba Classroom was an easy one, according to Eldon Strickland, Associate Director of BU's Office of Distance Education. Though in 2002 its online course instructors only infrequently offered fully live online classes, the ability to record courses proved to be extremely valuable. According to Strickland, "We wanted to have an archived session of all of our student activity online. We also had to have the archive feature available for student positions and academic integrity."

While most instructors who were new to teaching online weren't able to easily create a self-paced version of what had traditionally been teaching in face-to-face courses, Strickland and his colleagues within BU's Distance Education department began encouraging the faculty to teach synchronously. His team understood that their faculty needed the human touch provided via synchronous courses.

"With Wimba Classroom, we could replicate the same student-instructor relationship in our online environment," Strickland explains. His team knew Wimba Classroom was essential to creating an effective distance education program. He also noted that since their online courses covered such a variety of disciplines, that BU's different schools all varied in terms of the technology upon which they relied. For example, while the University's music programs are primarily Mac-based, other disciplines are often PC-based.

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WHAT THEY'RE SAYING

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Therefore, Wimba Classroom's cross-platform nature made it the obvious choice for the entire University.

"We could create an online presence for all of our instructors," he says.

In addition to teaching their regular course material live online, often instructors will augment their face-to-face classes by offering live online office hours via Wimba Classroom. And the additional uses don't stop there.

"One of the big uses today is with student mentoring," says Strickland. "We've also moved to a lot of peer-to-peer presentations and group assignments for our students."

Students rely on the full spectrum of communication options, from Voice-over IP and the phone, to text chats and live video via webcams.

And as BU expands its scope to reach additional students overseas, it'll rely on Wimba Voice to help non-native English speakers fully communicate with their instructors and classmates. "We will use Wimba Voice Boards for non-native English speaking law students who will be coming to the United States to take the bar exam," he says.

And to make access to the entire Wimba Collaboration Suite as easy as possible for both instructors and students, BU still integrates Wimba into its now Blackboard Vista course management system, the foundation of its online courses.

But whether Strickland talks about using Wimba for group projects, large online lectures with more than 250 students, for Doctoral dissertation defense preparation, or peer-to-peer projects in its Management program, he sums it up nicely by underscoring the fact that students and faculty truly feel as if they're part of the BU community when they use Wimba. He says, "Wimba has been a real enhancement to our online program and students are really connecting with one another."

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, webpages, 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.

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