Wimba
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University of Georgia
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WIMBA PRODUCTS AND SERVICES

- Wimba Classroom
- Wimba Voice
- Wimba Create

KEY BENEFITS

Drop-out rates in online courses went from 20% to 0% by using Wimba. Students and instructors see drastic increase in online interaction.

Sherry Ann Clouser, Ed.D.
Coordinator, Instructional and Distance Technologist, University of Georgia

University of Georgia Bridges Languages and Cultures
for the U.S.-Brazil Consortium on Technology Integration

"There's virtually no difference between my online classes that are done in Wimba versus the classes I teach face-to-face."
-Michael Orey, Associate Professor, University of Georgia

Ranked in the top 20 among public universities in the United States by *U.S. News and World Report*, the University of Georgia (UGA) is on the move. UGA is "building the New Learning Environment," an academic and intellectual community which recognizes that the digital age is transforming traditional academic disciplines. And thanks in part to Wimba, UGA has become one of the leading technology innovators in the country and has already embarked on one of the most unique worldwide distance education initiatives.

UGA is one of four universities from different corners of the Americas that has developed a compelling program to address a pair of converging educational realities: the growing impact of technology on education and the increasing commonness of classes whose students represent multiple cultures, nationalities, races and ethnicities.

The University of Georgia, along with Utah State University in the United States and Brazil's Universidade Federal do Ceará and Universidade Estadual Paulista, Bauru, have formed the U.S.-Brazil Consortium on Technology Integration. The consortium is funded by grants from the U.S. Department of Education's Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (FIPSE) and the Brazilian Ministry of Education's Fundacao Coordenacao de Aperfeicoamento de Pessoal de Nivel Superior (CAPES).

The consortium's centerpiece program involves Instructional Technology professors from the universities teaching courses to students on both continents through the use of top learning technologies, which include most notably, Wimba. Enrolled students also spend time on-site in both the United States and Brazil over the span of three semesters plus one summer month, taking distance courses from both locations so they can be immersed in both cultures and languages while also experiencing education technologies first hand.

University of Georgia Associate Professor Michael Orey serves as principal investigator under the FIPSE/

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THE UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA UNDERSTANDS THAT WIMBA BRINGS STUDENTS AND INSTRUCTORS CLOSER TOGETHER

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-Michael Orey, Associate Professor, University of Georgia

CAPES grant and teaches Learning Theory and Introduction to Instructional Technology for the consortium. He's also currently the instructor for the consortium's doctoral seminar.

"We have a face-to-face component for students in the program and have used IP video in the past," said Orey. "For the [distance] classroom component, we are now using Wimba Classroom exclusively."

Orey and the consortium were introduced to the power of Wimba by Sherry Clouser of the Center for Teaching and Learning at the University of Georgia. UGA has been a user of Wimba solutions since 2001 when it first implemented 25 Wimba Classroom seats to enhance the collaboration capabilities of its learning management system, WebCT. UGA now maintains an annual licensing agreement with Wimba, using Wimba Classroom, Wimba Voice to add voice interaction, and Wimba Create for easy production of course content, all embedded in Blackboard Vista, to support learning for thousands of students across multiple colleges.

UGA courses that use Wimba Classroom run the gamut from Art Appreciation and Biochemistry, to Food Science, International Business, and Statistics. In the Fall 2007 semester, more than 900 active rooms were being used at UGA with more than 2,500 user accounts.

For the consortium, Wimba enables 24/7 access to archived classroom lectures and materials, supporting the varied needs of the instructors and students in a program that spans four universities, four time zones, and two languages.

Daniel Maestro of the Universidade Estadual Paulista, Bauru, and Myra Blackmon of UGA are currently enrolled in the program as graduate students. Maestro, who also works full-time for the Brazilian education technology company MStech, appreciates the 24/7 access to lectures and course materials provided by Wimba.

"With the Wimba Classroom technology I can access the content anytime," Maestro said. "In terms of access to information, communication, achievement of the tasks, I believe that the study online makes the process easier because everything is available 24 hours a day with Wimba."

Maestro said the presence of the online instructor is vital to the student's orientation, especially when the course has a goal of academic formation, reinforcing the value of collaboration within an online learning environment. Orey also agrees that personal interaction is vital to having a successful online class.

"I have the most success by using Wimba because it helps me to make those connections with my students, and not only the connections that I make with my students, but the connections the students have with each other," he said.

Blackmon made a mid-career switch to the world of educational technology. Formerly a communications professional and adjunct professor in the UGA communications school, she is now pursuing her Masters degree in Education Technology. "I take all my collaboration classes in the evenings from my home office using Wimba Classroom," Blackmon said.

The power of collaboration can take interesting turns in the virtual classroom. Two of Orey's other students, who met in his Introduction to Instructional Technology class a few years ago, got married during the spring of 2006.

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Through the work of UGA's Orey and his colleagues from the Federal University of Ceará, Utah State University, and the Universidade Estadual Paulista, Bauru, students in both hemispheres are becoming future leaders of instructional technology. Their work in the years ahead will help bring the benefits of education technology to countless students and further break down learning barriers tied to geography, language, and culture. Wimba Classroom provides a vital part of the infrastructure supporting this powerful education endeavor.

"When I teach asynchronously," Orey said, "I would have about 20% of my students that were either dropping out or failing my online classes, and these are graduate students who successfully went through the K12 system and successfully got their undergraduate degrees. But by now having these synchronous classes with Wimba, it essentially is the experience with which they've been successful for 16 years. There's virtually no difference between my online classes that are done in Wimba versus the classes I teach face-to-face."

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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