Cable-Ready Science

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Students pursuing health science career programs at Floyd College were recently provided the lecture portion of the Anatomy and Physiology biology sequence via live and repeat broadcast television over Floyd College's cable television station. The success rate of the students participating matched that of their counterparts in traditional lecture classes. The television delivery was adapted to more visual presentation, and supported by supplementary materials made available to the students. The course is now being offered as college-by-cassette.

Can a high-content science course be delivered to students via live-broadcast television? "Yes, it CAN!" During fall quarter 1995 and winter quarter 1996, the lecture portion of a two quarter course sequence in Anatomy and Physiology was presented through the Division of Extended Learning to registered students in the broadcast area of FCTV Channel 99 (Floyd College television serving Rome and Floyd County). In preparation for this delivery, extensive syllabi and lecture notes with an interactive study guide were developed and made accessible to the students. Presentation software and training were made available for the instructor. Permissions were obtained to use pictures, graphics, and ancillary aids associated with the chosen textbook. Fair use policies were reviewed and followed appropriately.

The lecture portion of the sequence was on the college schedule in two ways: as a studio course on site at FCTV studio for those students needing the course live at that location (those who live outside the broadcast area) and as a telecourse which could be viewed at home in the broadcast area or at the main campus for students with other courses there, or from library taped copies. Student enrollment totaled 31. The above-listed "attendance" patterns soon "mixed" as students began to tape for each other. The students were required to attend a weekly on-campus laboratory session and specifically scheduled tests. Individual attention was available during laboratory session (as occurs in traditional large-enrollment science courses). A tutorial center was available.

One of the most important aspects in the development of this course was student feedback. In something so new for all of us, the only way to learn was to jump in and try it. The students were tremendously helpful and encouraging as they critiqued the effort on a continual basis. We experimented with several avenues for visual presentation and the students were quick to tell us which ones worked and which ones did not.

This mechanism of course delivery is not necessarily better or worse than the typical on-campus delivery. It is just DIFFERENT. The advantages are numerous. The technology itself brings the possibility of greater visual stimulus for the student. We were able to generate close-up demonstrations with lab materials, produce video-clips from on-site demonstrations, and excerpt "teasers" from existing software in order to encourage the students to see certain supplementary material on reserve in the library. The students were able to benefit from "repeat" viewing as well as the flexibility of scheduling that fits with their busy personal schedules. (Procrastination is a pitfall, however!)

The success of this educational venture is still being evaluated. Two-thirds of the first group finished with a C or better grade. Six students from another teacher's class used videotaped segments of the FCTV class, and an unknown number of others viewed the FCTV class at home in order to supplement their study. Many community members commented upon catching the class by "channel surfing."

Is such a class worth the effort? Yes, yes, yes. The product can be used in several ways to help students have more educational access: as college-by-cassette, repeat broadcast, in the library to cover absences of either student or teacher, or as tutorials. In fact, presently I have 41 students representing 12 counties enrolled in the college-by-cassette format. Does this class design lead to the replacement of teachers? No, no, no. Rather, it can be used to free teachers to other creative efforts, while expanding enrollment.

For more information about FCTV, contact Carla Patterson, Director of Extended Learning, Floyd College Heritage Hall, P.O. Box 1864, Rome GA 30162; (V) 706-802-5300; (F) 706-802-5997; carla_patterson@heritage.fc.peachnet.edu.

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