

## Final Report

### Project Title: Enhancing Online Teaching Through Podcasting

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#### Overview of Year-Long Progress

During the past year, I was able to complete the objectives set forth in my initial proposal for The Enhancing Teaching and Learning Through Podcasting project. I spent the last year immersing myself in readings about how educators are using podcasts in their classrooms, learning about the technology behind producing audio and video podcasts, as well as the production aspect of what makes a good podcast. I initially produced a few "test" podcasts for my current web-enhanced online courses and have gotten informal feedback from students: they were enthusiastic about this element of online teaching.

The course Curriculum Design for Science Teaching will started in the spring of 2007 and my goal is to produce 5-10 audio or video podcasts for the course. These podcasts ranged from 2 - 5 minutes in length and served to introduce and reinforce course content, develop and connect course concepts, and enhance what was being presented in the course models from week to week. For example, for Week 1, I used the podcast to help the students "walk through" the syllabus, something that I do routinely during face-to-face courses, but that has not happened during online courses (in the past, students just clicked on the syllabus link and unless I specifically pointed out important features elsewhere, I was never certain that they were reading the most important parts of the syllabus). Another example of how podcasts were used was to pick up on important points that emerged during the weekly discussions: to clear up confusions, continue discussions, answer questions about course assignments,

I requested frequent feedback from students to guide the content of the podcasts including what content or topics would be valuable to visit, as well as advice about the structure and delivery of the podcasts. There were a few technological glitches which were quickly resolved with student feedback, but beyond that student feedback was overwhelmingly positive. This selection of quotes is representative of the vast majority of student feedback:

*It did add a personal touch. If I didn't already know you, it would have given me a feel that there is a real person behind all of this online stuff! You tend to forget that sometime with all the hours spent here.*

*I really appreciated the podcasts. In an online course it provided an opportunity to explore a more personal medium and break up the unidimensional nature of online posting. I really thought that it was a bit more dynamic. Overall it was just nice to realize that there is a person on the other end of an online course.*

Even with the hours and hours of planning involved in creating an online class, there is one aspect of face-to-face learning that it is difficult to recreate: the personal connection. In addition to providing a chance to pull strands of the course together and further explain directions, podcasts provide a chance for students to have some personal connection to the instructor.

The following table summarizes the progress of the project.

Project Goal	How Goal Was Achieved
<p>1. Create 5-10 podcasts to be embedded in WebCT course.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li> <p>• <b>Attended last year's SITE conference to learn about how educators are using podcasting.</b> I was able to learn many innovative ways that other educators are using podcasting. Among the ideas that interested me were using podcasts for demonstrations, as narrated Power Point presentations, as well as for providing brief 2-3 minute personalized feedback on student work.</p> </li> <li> <p>• <b>Read professional journals and podcast reference materials.</b> With grant money, I was able to purchase several books about the production of podcasting and was able to create a bibliography of resources which I have been able to share with other faculty.</p> </li> <li> <p>• <b>Request on-going feedback from course participants</b> The feedback from students in my online courses tested a few podcasts was extremely positive. Initial feedback indicated that I needed to provide more technical guidelines (<i>How do I make a podcast work?</i>), but after students became accustomed to them, they were very enthusiastic about them. One student who was taking another course even said, "I wish THAT teacher used podcasts -- it would be so helpful!"</p> </li> </ul>

<p>2. Develop faculty workshop about podcasting</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Use student feedback</b> Student feedback was used to make modifications to the podcasts. For example, a brief overview of what podcasts were was created (most people had never even heard of them) and a trouble-shooting guide was created.</li> <li>• <b>Faculty Teaching Center Workshop Podcast Panel</b> In January, I was on a panel in a Faculty Teaching Center workshop which highlighted the used of podcasts on the UMass Lowell campus. I provided an overview of this project, provided copies of the most useful journal articles I had collected, provided a bibliography about how to get started with podcasting, and was able to demonstrate the simple tools needed to start podcasting. Response to the discussion was overwhelmingly positive -- podcasting is something many faculty have started to implement at a variety of different levels.</li> </ul>
<p>3. Develop a faculty handbook for using podcasts</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Annotated Bibliography</b> The handbook turned into an annotated bibliography and collection of articles for faculty. With the high interest in podcasting, many workshops and tutorials have been offered on campus, making a handbook unnecessary.</li> </ul>

## Project Expenditures

Quantity	Item	Purpose	Cost / Item	Sub Total
1	iMac computer w/built-in microphones, podcasting software	Recording and editing podcasts	\$1300	\$1350
1	Books and PD resources	Background info for project	\$150	\$150
1	Headphone with microphone	Recording	\$50	\$50
1	iRiver recorder	For portable recording, interviews	\$100	\$100
			<b>Total:</b>	<b>\$1650</b>

**Conclusion**

I feel that I have learned a great deal about podcasting during this year -- I have learned a great deal about how other educators use podcasting with their teaching, the potential of using podcasts in online courses, and the technological aspects of creating a simple podcasts. In addition to the course benefits, this project has also introduced my students to the variety of science podcasts which they can use to supplement their teaching (NPR Science Friday, Science in the City, National Geographic podcasts).

In the future, I will definitely continue to add podcasts to my online courses. This grant has enabled many productive conversations about the use of podcasting with other faculty members, as well as many mini "tutoring" sessions about how to get started. I would also like to produce video podcasts (vodcasts) for some sessions -- but I feel that the long-term success of adding podcasts to online courses depends on creating simple pieces that are easy to edit -- so if vodcasts were produced, they would have to be very simple.

Another goal would be to have online students create their own podcasts. This grant allowed me to see that with free applications, an inexpensive microphone, and a bit of training, students could create and share their own podcasts in an online environment. I think this would be an exciting way to take online courses to a whole new level.

I am grateful for this experience and wish to thank the Office for Academic Technology for the chance to explore this teaching approach.