

eLearning at Skidmore College

Some define eLearning solely in terms of online courses and training, while others use a broader definition that includes Web-based learning, virtual classrooms and digital collaboration. Skidmore faculty is taking steps into the world of eLearning in varied and interesting ways. Information Technologies, specifically Academic Technologies, has implemented a wide range of instructional technologies that support faculty in their efforts to digitally enhance the traditional classroom and extend student experiences beyond the classroom.

Our faculty members are supplementing teaching and learning with the use of personal response systems, tablets as digital presentation tools, and bringing speakers into the classroom virtually through videoconferencing. The use of the Blackboard learning management system continues to grow, as well as the features the system provides. Our Blackboard installation offers the following set of tools: discussion boards, audio discussion boards, blogs, wikis, ePortfolios, electronic submission of assignments, online tests, grade books, and more. All of these technologies are essential components of a hybrid or fully online course.

Recently, a few faculty have generated dialogue on campus regarding massive open online courses, or MOOCs. A MOOC is a category of online course where the participants and course materials are distributed widely across the Web. Most of these courses are free of charge and do not bear credits. Academic Technologies supports all the technologies necessary for a standard MOOC. If a faculty member should find this type of course delivery of interest, it would be possible to assist with building the framework for such an online course.

Our experience in supporting Skidmore faculty has shown that they are most responsive to new technologies when they hear about it from a friend or colleague. On campus, faculty members are provided opportunities to witness how colleagues are using technology in new ways. With the encouragement of the New York 6 Digital Humanities Initiative, there will be even more extensive opportunities for faculty to network with colleagues across institutions on information rich projects. Academic Technologies is poised to assist faculty with exploring these new interdisciplinary models of collaboration between faculty and students.

Some interesting reads on MOOCs and LOOCs:

<http://chronicle.com/blogs/wiredcampus/liberal-arts-colleges-venture-into-unlikely-territory-online-courses/32029>

<http://www.insidehighered.com/news/2012/06/29/liberal-arts-college-explore-uses-blended-online-learning>

<http://www.insidehighered.com/news/2012/09/06/u-maine-campus-experiments-small-scale-high-touch-open-courses>