

# **TEACHER TRAINING MATERIALS FOR DISTANCE LEARNING CLASSROOMS**

## **Beyond the Talking Head/Hairy Arm**

In reviewing the research associated with distance education, particularly the two-way interactive video system, little attention has been focused on the instructional strategies that are effective. The Teletraining Institute at the University of Oklahoma refers to us needing to move beyond the talking head/hairy arm syndrome. Simply put, this delivery mechanism consists of an instructor talking to the camera (talking head) and the incorrect use of the document camera (placing objects under the camera and switching to the document camera,, forgetting to return to the instructor or classroom camera). This section provides a listing of effective strategies for using two-way.

## **Assign students to home groups to be used throughout the semester.**

If you have more than six students in your class, you can establish home groups to be used through the semester. An ideal size is three in each group so if, for example, you have six students at a site, you will have two home groups. Depending on the size of your class, have students number off in consecutive order based on the number of groups of three you can have. For example, if you have twelve students, you can have four groups of three. Have all the one's for a group, all the two's a group, all the three's a group, and all the four's a group. If you have a number not divisible by three, assign the remaining students to an existing group. Have students get to know each other, and initially decide who will assume the following roles: presenter, questioner, and recorder (these roles will be switched throughout the semester). Assigning the home groups early on will save time when presenting instruction. You will merely have to say please get in your home groups and.

## **Jigsaw**

This cooperative learning technique is particularly beneficial when teaching at a distance to encourage students from various sites to interact. Have students get in their home groups. Then, have each student in each home group number off in groups of three. Have all the one's form a work group, all the two's form a work group, etc. Assign one group to meet with their numbers from other sites. For example, the two's from Commerce might meet with the two's from Mesquite and Mount Pleasant. To avoid distraction, you might have other students to go to different room locations to complete the assignment. One excellent method for using the jigsaw approach is the read/learn/teach strategy.

## **Read/Learn/Teach**

Rather than your lecturing on topics in a textbook or handout, you can have students become responsible for the information. Assign each group a section and tell them they are responsible for reading, learning, and teaching the information to their home group. For example, you could assign group number one the first three paragraphs, group number two and next two paragraphs, etc. while the students are in the small groups, they are to discuss the sections and brainstorm strategies for presenting the information to their home group. Stress the need to be creative in presenting information to their home groups. Give students ten to fifteen minutes to prepare for their presentation. Have students return to their home groups and teach their team. Conduct an oral

question/answer session to insure students achieved the objective of your lesson.

### **Exercise Excitement**

Begin instruction with a short, simple, exciting and interactive activity. Make certain it is relevant to the topic and makes the point in relatively short order.

#### Examples:

*Problem probe*-begin by assigning a short problem, case, or incident to small groups. Secure feedback; then begin your talk.

*Quiz the Expert*-post three or four major concerns or problem areas with which your topic deals. Have each student develop one question for each of the problem areas. Have each site group review all questions for each problem area and determine the two best questions for each area. Have each site select a presenter and ask you the questions to which you will respond.

*K-W-L Strategy*-Inform students of the topic/objective of your lesson. On a piece of paper, have students make three columns: what they know(K) about the subject, what they want (W) to know about the subject, and at the end of the class period, what they have learned (L).

*Video Vignette*-Use an opener (thought stimulator) or at a later point in your presentation. Ask for input from each site.

#### *Gallery View*

This is a good out-of-the seat activity when students have been required to sit for a long period of time. Assign students to their home groups and have them illustrate on paper the major points of the lesson addressed previously. Have them post their charts around the room and allow them to walk around and view illustrations. Have each group report major points to the other sites.

#### *Case Studies*

Variations of the traditional case study can be used effectively in any class and are particularly useful when teaching at a distance. The following are examples of variations that promote interaction between and among sites.

*Incident process*-examples from the real world of specific incidents or dilemmas others have faced. Presented orally by the instructor, followed with the question, "What would you do?"

*Mousetrap Technique*-designed to point out to students that their thinking about problems may be marked by various forms of faulty reasoning. Instructor presents case study orally and follows with the question, "What would you do?" Instructor and students play the devil's advocate by pointing out inconsistencies, double standards, etc.

*Letter Technique*-Prepare a master letter to be faxed to remote sites. The letter could be from you or

a fictitious person, but, nevertheless, should require the students to respond to a question or concern. Have each home group prepare a response and fax their responses to you. Read each letter and have students from remote sites discuss their responses. English teachers use the technique effectively by including grammatical errors and asking home groups to locate and correct the errors.

### *Tandem Teaching*

Tandem teaching teams up two (or more) individuals to share the teaching role. Team up two experts who agree, disagree, or an expert and a novice. Advanced planning with an outline, time limits, and presentation responsibilities is needed to clarify roles. Also, plan for feedback from the group so that it does not become an interview or series of short speeches by each co-presenter.

### *Mind/Concept Mapping*

This activity works well with problem solving and/or when a working definition is needed. Separate groups, within or among sites, can develop a map of major ideas and connectors associated with a given concept. Each group can then share their ideas about that concept and associations can be made.

### *Role Playing*

Briefly sketch out the problem and each person's role. Begin by clearly defining the scenario to the group. Ask each role player to introduce him/herself in terms of the role to help the group identify each voice with each role. Following the role play, discuss and analyze the situation. Keep it brief and simple.

### *Guest Speakers*

Why do you think talk shows are so popular? The use of guest speakers is an effective instructional tool to incorporate in your instructional deliveries.

### *Lecture*

Only use lecture when there is a need to present a great deal of information in a short amount of time. If you must lecture, keep it short-10-15 minutes is ideal. Make your delivery spontaneous and natural.

## **Using the Document Camera**

**The document camera is used to show:**

- Printed or hand-drawn materials
- 35mm slides
- Real 3-D Objects
- Other objects small enough to fit on the white board.

**Research indicates that instructors should be on the camera approximately 60% of the time.**

Use of the document camera to incorporate graphics is an effective tool for emphasizing points. To avoid the hairy arm syndrome, be certain your graphics are placed on the white board prior to switching to the document camera. Don't forget to return to the instructor or student camera.

## **Using the Computer**

A computer is connected to the two-way interactive system. In other words, what you see can be seen by remote sites. This system can be equipped with Microsoft Powerpoint, Microsoft Word, Internet, and other applications.

## How Can I Improve My Presentation Techniques for Compressed Video?

Based on Greydanus, Root, and Pribyl, 1991 and Lacy & Wolcott, 1988. For more information, refer to these excellent resources.

### A. Personal Presence:

- Arrive early; check equipment and have material ready.
- Review with each site at the start of each session to ensure all materials have arrive
- Maintain a natural, relaxed, conversational presence.
- Establish student speaking protocols with consideration of audio/video.
- Take time for friendly introductions at the beginning of the course.
- Be sure to involve students off-campus to encourage interaction and decrease isolation.
- Try not to exceed three points at a time. People remember things better in 3's: fresh, fast, friendly. Use visual materials as support wherever possible.
- Remain in the room at the start of the break to entertain any individual questions
- Record each session and occasionally review the tapes yourself.
- Identify strengths and weaknesses.
- Use end of course evaluations for feedback.

**B. Movement and Facial Expression:** Facial expressions and upper body movements are appropriate and effective. There are limitations in movement due to lighting, cameras and microphone arrangements. Make movements slow, smooth, and confined to a certain area. Be careful of blocking visuals or other people speaking. Be aware of how you are framed up before moving. Big sweeping gestures don't work well on the small screen. Small subtle gestures are not seen unless you are on an extreme close-up.

Avoid gestures that may be offensive to some cultures. Avoid distracting mannerisms (fussing with hair, scratching face, tapping your pen, or jingling change in your pocket.

**C. Speaking and Eye Contact:** Look into the camera to establish eye contact at the remote site. Pretend the camera is one of the students at your site. Also remember to scan the entire group when you speak to involve all students.

Concentrate on interaction and remember that pauses, questions and discussion are just as appropriate in the interactive videoconferencing classroom environment.

Speak in normal conversational tone, but more slowly and clearly. Vary vocal pitch, volume and flow of delivery. Add variety to your presentation through facial expressions and hand gestures. Use proper grammar and avoid meaningless linking responses such as "uh", "yeah", "you know", etc. Most people do not realize how often they use such distracting utterances.

Watch a video of your teaching to see if you have mannerisms that are annoying, and work on eliminating them.

#### **D. Pacing of Presentation:**

- Planned, purposeful change in the instructional activity, speech pattern or presentation of ideas is critical in maintaining interest and attention.
- Plan to use a variety of instructional activities, including group discussion, student presentations, lecture, and time for questions and feedback.
- Allow for spontaneity.
- Include a variety of visual materials, Pictures, graphs and charts reinforce key points.
- A prepared outline will help students organize information.
- Have materials ready, accessible and in the order you plan to use them.
- Use only short lesson segments (10-20 minutes) to avoid fatigue and boredom.
- Summarize or repeat important points.
- Use only short segments of videotapes (7-10 minutes). Have videotapes cued and give them a test run before class. Remote sites may prefer to play a copy of the tape at their site for clarity.

#### **E. Clothing and Appearance:**

- Cameras have some difficulty responding to solid, stark colors.
- Avoid clothing with small or busy patterns.
- Shiny, reflective surfaces create annoying light patterns
- Additional make-up is not required; powder is recommended.
- Wear clothes that make you feel comfortable and look at ease.
- Avoid white, black and other extreme colors.
- Avoid bright or noisy jewelry; don't wear a watch that beeps.

#### **F. Visual Aid Preparation:**

You may have noticed the television screen is wider than it is higher. Most screens have a 4 by 3 aspect ratio. That means the screen is 4 units wide by 3 units high. Use this "landscape" or horizontal approach to your graphics.

- Do not run your graphics close to the edge of the page.
- Keep it short and simple (KISS) and large and legible (KILL).
- Use a font size from 24-30 point. Use larger fonts for headings and sub-headings.
- Keep type styles similar.
- Keep to under 30 words per graphic.
- Keep to under 7 lines of text and 7 words per line.
- Keep to 1 idea per graphic. Breakdown the complex into the individual parts.
- Select contrasting colors; try to use soft-colored paper rather than white or use the color controls for the document camera to prevent glare.
- When writing, print clearly and in large letters and write slowly.
- Computer outputs can be interfaced with the system, if you have a lap-top computer with the right output. Otherwise a printout of Harvard Graphics or a similar program will also work well.

Practice with lights to avoid glare from overhead lights or the lights on the document camera. Leave materials on screen long enough to be read but not so long as to be dull. Remember to switch back to faces.

When drawing with markers, use a protective backing sheet to protect equipment from bleeding through (vis-...-vis pens work best.)

Prepared graphics are usually easier to read than those drawn during a class. Avoid visuals with glossy surfaces because the glare washes out the letters.

## Graphic Development

Use 24 point font or larger

Keep it under 30 words

No more than 7 lines

No more than 7 words per line.

### **A summary of Presentation Techniques:**

Nobody wants to see a “talking head!” As a distance learning instructor, your personal presence and mannerisms will impact your delivery. Becoming aware of appropriate movements, clothing and speaking protocols for interactive video is a new experience for most faculty. Remember to speak clearly and look into the camera so that the distant sites won’t experience isolation. Variety is the key. Pace your lessons with interactive activities and numerous visual aids. Remember, you cannot present as much as you could on a chalkboard! The limits of a TV screen force you to divide up your ideas. Be sure to leave visuals up long enough so people can copy them, or pass out advanced organizers or an outline ahead of time. Most people are visual learners, so incorporate as many exciting visuals as possible. You have many tools available to you in this situation, so take advantage of them.

### **Checklists**

We have already noted that many of the same characteristics that contribute to successful conventional teaching are applicable to telecommunications teaching. Yet, telecommunications teaching is different enough to require modifications of traditional teaching skills.

When considering distance, the fact that the instructor and students are not physically present in the same location affects the teaching and learning process (Lacy & Wolcott, 1988). Some of these concerns are summarized below:

- Creating and building rapport between the instructor and the students both individually and as a group.
- Gauging whether students comprehend the material and compensating for non-verbal cues and communication.
- Getting necessary materials and resources to and from students
- Getting and maintaining attention by using a variety of interactive teaching techniques
- Establishing good lines of communication and access to the instructor
- Providing instructional objective, review and feedback
- Encouraging active participation at all sites to prevent feelings of isolation
- Overcoming the fear and anxiety of the equipment/technology
- Modification of presentation styles and techniques for the media

In planning for telecommunications teaching, the instructor must keep in mind certain implications regarding distance teaching using telecommunications technology:

- It changes the teacher’s role and responsibilities
- It influences instructional methods and course design

It changes the student/teacher relationship

It changes the teaching/learning environment

Distance teaching increases course preparation time (Lacy & Wolcott, 1988)

“Recognizing that teaching via telecommunications is different from face-to-face teaching is the first step in preparing to teach effectively; the second step is to adapt teaching style, method and presentation to accommodate or compensate for differences” (Lacy & Wolcott, 1988, p 3).

### **Check Lists**

#### **Technical and Presentation Techniques:**

- \_\_\_\_\_ Can the camera “see” each person and you as you speak?
- \_\_\_\_\_ Did you establish protocols for the first class?
- \_\_\_\_\_ Did you arrive early to be sure the system is operation properly
- \_\_\_\_\_ Do you have alternate plans in case of technical failure?
- \_\_\_\_\_ Did you check your visuals to make sure the fonts were large enough?
- \_\_\_\_\_ Is your clothing and accessories appropriate for compressed video?
- \_\_\_\_\_ Do you have clear rights to show videotapes, graphics, etc. or do you need to obtain copyright clearance?
- \_\_\_\_\_ If videotaping the class, do you have all students’ permission?
- \_\_\_\_\_ Did you speak clearly and in a conversational tone?
- \_\_\_\_\_ Did you and other speakers project your voice when speaking?
- \_\_\_\_\_ Did you use a variety of visuals?
- \_\_\_\_\_ Did you minimize annoying mannerisms?
- \_\_\_\_\_ Did you smile and look into the camera?
- \_\_\_\_\_ Other:

Special Notes and Instructions:

Syllabus and Pre-Mailing Considerations:

- \_\_\_\_\_ Did you include name, address, phone, fax, e-mail, and office hour information?
- \_\_\_\_\_ Did you include some biographical and background information?
- \_\_\_\_\_ Did you include course prerequisites, a course description and required/recommended readings?
- \_\_\_\_\_ Did you make arrangements if library resources are required?
- \_\_\_\_\_ Did you specify computer hardware/software requirements?
  
- \_\_\_\_\_ Are there any other resource needs, such as laboratory supplies and/or accessibility, parking requirements, or other specialized resources?
- \_\_\_\_\_ Did you include a glossary of unfamiliar terms?
- \_\_\_\_\_ Is there a list of assignments and due dates with lead time for mailing?
- \_\_\_\_\_ Is there an attendance policy?
- \_\_\_\_\_ Is there space for student notes?
- \_\_\_\_\_ Did you send a roster of other students with contact information/profiles?
- \_\_\_\_\_ Did you include formative and summative evaluation procedures?
- \_\_\_\_\_ Other:

Special Notes and Instructions:

Building Interpersonal Rapport and Teaching Strategies:

- \_\_\_\_\_ Did you divide attention equally among sites?
- \_\_\_\_\_ Did you address people by name or site to ensure involvement?
- \_\_\_\_\_ Did you plan time for interaction?
- \_\_\_\_\_ Did you allow time at the beginning and end of class for questions and administrative tasks?
- \_\_\_\_\_ Is there additional time available on the system for faculty-student conferences?
- \_\_\_\_\_ Did you make the instructional objective clear?
- \_\_\_\_\_ Did you provide an outline of key points?
- \_\_\_\_\_ Did you use a variety of teaching/learning techniques?
- \_\_\_\_\_ Did you consider the nine events of instruction in planning your lesson?
- \_\_\_\_\_ Did you preview, present and review?
- \_\_\_\_\_ Other:

Special Notes and Instructions: