



Friday, May 18, 2001

OU expands online course offerings

By **Jeff Samoray**, *OU Web Writer*

Oakland University is expanding its online course offerings for the fall 2001 semester, reflecting the university's commitment to using technology to deliver education to its students.

Fall online classes are offered in Accounting, Art History, Computer Science and Engineering, Health Sciences, and Nursing, including the entire RN to BSN sequence. OU may offer additional online courses in Computer Science and Engineering and Rhetoric for a total of 13 to 15 classes, said Mark Ludorf, interim director of the Information Technology Institute.

Online courses allow students to view course material, participate in group discussions and take exams at any time of day or night from the comfort of home.

Ludorf said responses from both students and faculty were generally positive to the initial group of online courses OU offered in the winter 2001 semester.

"Most students said they enjoyed the flexibility and convenience of learning online," Ludorf said. "Overall I think they'd say they had a good experience if they had a good instructor - one who was caring and willing to go that extra mile because of the new technology. Faculty who participated said they enjoyed teaching their course, and found the level and depth of the interaction with their students to be far greater on the Web than in class."

Freshman Julie Harwood, who took Foundations of Contemporary Psychology online in the winter 2001 semester, said she appreciated the flexibility of the course since she lives in Highland, works part time and is raising a 14-year-old daughter. "I wish I could take all of my classes online," Harwood said. "I'm online quite a bit to begin with and I'm a night person - I took most of my tests at 2 a.m. After my daughter was in bed, I could get online and do my thing. I didn't have to worry about being interrupted or stopping in the middle of the day to run to OU. I also liked the tutorial quizzes. They helped me review the material and make sure I knew the information."

Robby Stewart, professor and chair of Psychology, taught Lifespan Development online in the winter semester. He said students were more able to interact with him and each other online than in a traditional classroom.

"In a lecture hall with 150 students, it's mostly me talking and students taking notes, with very little interaction," Stewart said. "With the online course limited to 25 to 30 students, they got to interact with each other and me. I designed the course so that would happen. The students had to read and respond to each other's papers. It was the best way to create an asynchronous conversation."

Ludorf cautioned that online courses aren't for all students, in part because of the amount of interaction that's required.

"You can't sit in the back row passively," Ludorf said. "Most students said they spent more time working in an online course than in a traditional course. They all have to have a voice and be engaged in the class."

Ludorf said there will be minimal change in how online classes operate, though some fall semester evening courses in Education and Health Sciences will have an online component.

"We know people can only sustain attention for a limited time," Ludorf said. "Some night courses will spend about two hours in class and migrate other activities to the Web. It will allow a faculty member to continue the class beyond the threshold of the classroom and stress a learning component.

"But now what we have is a cohort of faculty that have been through the experience and can provide mentoring to other faculty embarking in online courses. We're optimistic about being able to offer more of these courses, and that our faculty will see the value these courses have for themselves and their students."

For more information about online courses at OU and characteristics of good online course learners, go to www2.oakland.edu/webcourse.

SUMMARY

Oakland University is expanding its online course offerings for the fall 2001 semester, reflecting the university's commitment to using technology to deliver education to its students.

Created by CareTech Administrator (webservices@caretechsolutions.com) on Friday, May 18, 2001

Modified by CareTech Administrator (webservices@caretechsolutions.com) on Friday, May 18, 2001

Article Start Date: Thursday, December 4, 2003