

Distance learning program to debut at ECSU: Classes offered via the Web, videoconferencing

by Dwayne Pope

If you thought the only way to get a college education involved trudging to class through heat, wind, rain and snow, think again: by the start of the 1998 summer semester ECSU students will be able to take courses through an innovative program called "distance learning. Courses will be offered by cable television, the Internet, and teleconferencing—or a combination of these technologies.

How does distance learning work?

ECSU Director of Instructional Technology, Craig Kaml, who is directing the project at ECSU, said students will be able to register for classes using the Internet Web-based courses which will require students to have access to a computer, a printer and a modem, said Kaml.

"Students who take more video-oriented courses will need to have access to videoconferencing with interactive audio," added Kaml.

Although students will be separated by distance from their instructor, Kaml pointed out the new program will allow students to become "active learners." Students will be able to respond to given assignments using the Internet, including electronic mail and chat modes and local teleconferencing cen-

ters. Instructors will also employ on-line interactive presentations. Kaml said, "testing will be administered both on-line and/or at local high schools and community colleges."

Students interested in distance learning should be "highly motivated and independent," in order to take full advantage of what the courses offer.

"The courses will be more coached and less instructed," said Kaml. "They're much more Socratic. The student is not a passive learner listening to a lecture. Distance learning involves the student more in the learning process; they have to take control. It's a shift in thinking."

Twelve ECSU faculty members who have expressed an interest in the distance learning project will begin training for the program during the spring '98 semester, with pilot courses to be offered either in the summer or fall. Initial course offerings include Business Communications, Introduction to Music, Creative Writing, Public Speaking, Foundations of Education, Mastering Today's Software, and Introduction to Basic Biotechnology. Each course will be limited to 15 students.

Kaml said distance learning will allow ECSU to remain competitive with other colleges already using the program, said Kaml. It will also extend the

University's reach to different types of clientele, including older students, retirees, prison inmates and homemakers.

The new technology is "very customer oriented," said Kaml. Students will be able to take courses basically "on their own time," he added.

The program is taking advantage of ECSU's videoconferencing center, located in the G.R. Little Library.

Deborah Flippens, director of the center, will coordinate the scheduling of courses at 120 sites in North Carolina. The sites are located at the 16 campuses of the UNC-system, as well as community colleges, state agencies, high schools, and some correctional facilities.

Flippens will also be responsible for sending and receiving course information, seminars, and conferences.

"The two-way audio and video conferencing center will play a major role in the success of the distance learning program," said Flippens.

Dr. Glenda Griffin, who plans to teach a distance learning course in Writing and Reading Across the Curriculum, praised the new program for its attempt to reach a variety of students.

"Much like the course I'm instructing, the program will attract students

from many different disciplines," said Griffin, a professor in the Department of Language, Literature & Communication.

Many ECSU students say they are intrigued by the idea of distance learning.

Troy Lewter, a senior English/Drama major, who will be interning in Los Angeles in the spring semester, said the distance learning program "is perfect for students in my situation. It makes learning easier for students who can't physically attend classes."

Lamont Robinson, a senior math major, pointed out that distance learning "will not only be a benefit students, it will also help boost enrollment at ECSU."

In-state students enrolled in courses through the new program will pay the same fee as ordinary tuition for a three-hour course, under the current plan. Students will be responsible for their own Internet connections.

The committee on distance learning is currently conducting a survey to determine the level of interest in the proposed courses. Students can learn more about the project by visiting the University's Virtual College Page at <http://198.85.48.246/dised/index.HTML>.

Nov. fire damages New Complex

by Tiffany Newell and Garry Walton

A Nov. 9 fire in the New Complex disrupted the lives of four ECSU students.

The fire not only damaged and/or destroyed their personal property, it also forced them to move out of their rooms.

The fire started around 2:30 p.m. in suite 201 of Complex C after a candle left burning unattended ignited window blinds, according to University Safety Officer, Michael Godfrey. The room was empty when the fire started, said Godfrey. Other students were in the suite, however.

No one was injured but the residents suffered extensive property losses, Godfrey said. A TV and stereo in room four melted.

The hallway sustained smoke damage, and room one "was completely gutted," said Godfrey.

The victims of the fire refused to comment.

"I just don't want to talk about it," said Tresca Williams, a resident of the suite.

ECSU student Arteoia Covington was visiting in suite 201 when the fire started.

"Someone noticed the smoke or smelled it," she said, "but we thought it was just something minor in the room. Then the smoke grew thicker."

Covington said she was not aware of a smoke alarm going off. "If it did," she said, "no one heard it."

Godfrey said after the fire the electrician could not test to see if the smoke detectors in the rooms were working, due to the fire damage and water sprayed on the fire.

After the room was cleaned up, he said it looked as if the detector was "knocked down or off the wall."

All dorm rooms on campus have smoke detectors. They are checked "during the summer and in between semesters," according to Wilma Jordan, Maintenance Supervisor. If the detectors use batteries, staff members check to make sure they work. A test button on the detectors will sound off an alarm, "to let you know it is operational," Jordan said.

"Cooking and burning incense causes a problem with the smoke detectors," said Jordan. "That's why we inform students not to do it."

The dorms have pull stations, which

will sound off a loud alarm when pulled, allowing students to evacuate the building. The New Complex does not have pull stations, said Jordan, "because they are designed as apartments."

The New Complex currently has no sprinkler system. However, according to Godfrey a sprinkling system has been "on the drawing boards" for some time, for the Complex.

"We recently got funding for it," said Godfrey.

A new sprinkler system for the complex will be under construction in the summer, said Jordan.

Damone Hyman said she was watching a movie with her friends in her room in Mitchell Lewis when she heard "screams outside the window."

"We rushed outside to see what was going on," said Hyman. "At first we thought there was a fight, but once we looked outside we saw smoke coming from Complex C."

Hyman said she then tried to notify the fire department by calling "all four numbers that are listed on the back of my door, to call in case there is a fire. I couldn't get through; all four numbers were busy."

POETRY

Heart Skipping Beat

Infatuated visions of sexual desire,
Heart skipping beats
Hot like fire.
Sarcastic, but serious when I approach
you
Waiting to ask the question:
Can we get together and be one, not
two?
While you answer, my eyes are
observing
your lips,
And I peep your eye focusing directly
on my hips,
Turning your head so I can't see
you look,
But you turned too slow; so, baby
you're shook.
Fantasies going wild, while running
through my head
I'm wondering how it would be
me and you in bed
Your warm body
So very close to mine
Make this dove cry
Prince, make it genuine
As we lay that night lusting with no
sorrow
I wish that there were 24 more hours
before tomorrow.

Cheris "Nicky" Peebles