

Indiana University/ Purdue University – Fort Wayne

WHERE ONLINE LEARNING IS AN INTERACTIVE CONVERSATION

Indiana University/Purdue University (IPFW) offers more than 200 academic programs from its campus in Fort Wayne, Indiana. Traditional face-to-face classes make up a majority of the courses, but online classes are growing fast due to demand from more than 12,000 students. Currently, online courses make up 17 percent of the total courses during the regular school year and the number grows to 30 percent during the summer semester.

In an effort to stimulate learning in online classes, the university's Center for the Enhancement of Learning and Teaching (CELT) began providing streaming media technology to faculty. Although there was strong demand from the staff, the technology proved hard to use and only supported one file format. "Students were having problems accessing the media from different devices and the professors were asking for more in-depth capabilities," said Samantha Birk, associate director for Instructional Technologies at CELT.

With faculty demand growing quickly, the university began an official search for a new, user-friendly solution that would support a wide variety of file formats, integrate well with the Blackboard Learn™ platform, and be easy to implement.

After carefully reviewing several options, the university selected Kaltura. Kaltura, a market-leading open source online video platform, allows faculty to easily create, edit and upload videos with a click of a button. Once the videos are uploaded to the cloud-based platform,



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Michael Phillips
Media Services Technologist for
Information Technology Services
CELT.



students can view the videos from any device in any location. “Kaltura’s flexible and easy-to-use platform integrates well with Blackboard, allowing faculty to embed videos with specific lesson plans,” said Birk. “This solution provides a more rounded learning experience for our students.”

Since the platform is based on open source technology, Kaltura was able to customize the solution to meet the university’s specific needs. “The integration was flawless,” said Michael Phillips, media services technologist for Information Technology Services at CELT. “Kaltura created a ‘right-sized’ solution to help faculty use the system within the school’s current IT infrastructure.”

At the same time the implementation was taking place, the institution issued iPads to the entire faculty. As a result, creating and editing videos from any location became more accessible and demand for Kaltura’s solution grew. The university started with 500 Gigabytes of media assets, which quickly grew to 3 Terabytes over the course of a few semesters.

“The technology is a great way to get across complex concepts that would otherwise be impossible with text,” said physics professor Dr. Jacob Millspaw. “The videos keep the online class more like a conversation, which helps with experimentation and learning.”

Dr. Millspaw makes two videos per week to keep his students engaged. One video might be instructions on how to recreate an experiment – such as the velocity of falling objects. Once the video is posted, he then monitors the class discussion group within his Blackboard Learn course to see if students are having any problems. If a problem does arise, Dr. Millspaw creates a short follow-up video to address the issue and immediately embeds it within his original assignment in the Blackboard Learn course. “The students are able to better understand the information since problems can be addressed in real-time with the videos,” said Dr. Millspaw.

Sometimes students have questions that have already been addressed in past videos. In this case, the professor directs them to the class Playlist within Kaltura. The Playlist is a central location that holds all of the videos for each class. “Using the Playlist, students can browse through the videos and play what they want in order to refresh their memory on certain topics,” said Dr. Millspaw.

Architecture and interior design professor Matt Kubik uses Kaltura to teach freehand sketching to his online studio classes. Students learn to create renderings of unique architectural shapes and textures such as foliage. “Before, students would study famous architectural landmarks around the world, but the sites were inaccessible to them in the classroom,” said Kubik. “With Kaltura, I can travel to the locations and shoot video of myself in front of the buildings drawing specific objects.”

The professor has traveled to many locations including Phoenix, Chicago, Rome and the famous Einstein Tower in Potsdam, Germany. “Kaltura lets me take my students anywhere in the world, making these landmarks much more accessible,” said Kubik.

Students watch the videos and then must create their own rendering. The students then either photograph or scan their work and deliver it digitally to the professor through their Blackboard Learn course, often with comments included. “Digital delivery is great because I can blow it up and really see the quality of the work,” said Kubik. The professor can also leave students feedback about the projects in their Blackboard Learn course. “I have a real interactive conversation going on with the class, which gets them very engaged,” said Kubik.

Now that the use of Kaltura has spread university-wide, the next step is to let students create their own videos for class. “It’s amazing how students were thinking of this on their own,” said Samantha Birk. “It will be important for faculty to leverage this demand in a constructive way, and with Kaltura, faculty will be able to easily manage this process.”

