

Blackboard Enables LIM College to Launch Distance Learning

Since 1939, LIM College—Where Business Meets Fashion—has set itself apart from other fashion colleges by focusing on the *business* of fashion. While other institutions prepare aspiring designers for artistically creative careers, LIM College prepares its graduates to assume leadership roles in fashion and visual merchandising, marketing, and management.

As the demands of the industry have changed, so have LIM College's course offerings. What started as a certificate program has grown to include Associate's and Bachelor's degrees, as well as a Master's of Business Administration degree program with concentrations in management and entrepreneurship. This is all in addition to liberal arts, math and humanities courses. To better accommodate its student body of approximately 1,300, the college has expanded its physical facilities several times, including centralizing and improving its student housing—no small feat in the heart of midtown Manhattan.

Alumni Advanced the Case for Distance Learning

As undergraduate and advanced degrees have become more common pre-requisites for advancement in fashion and retail, LIM College graduates who received Associate's degrees began

contacting the college to request post-degree training and education, as well as Bachelor's degrees. However, even if such programs were made available, there were two challenges preventing students from attending classes:

- ▶ **They were already juggling busy work schedules in locations all over the country.**
- ▶ **Middle- and senior-level executives' reputations could be damaged if colleagues learned that they had not already earned the degrees usually associated with their positions.**

In addition to wanting to continue to serve the educational needs of past graduates, Senior Vice President for Academic and Student Affairs Dr. Jo-Ann Rolle said, "We had always considered our enrollment to be traditional, onsite students. This was a unique opportunity to reach out to adult learners in a new way."

THE CHALLENGE

Cost effectively support the continuing education needs of alumni





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Dr. Jo-Ann Rolle
Senior Vice President for Academic
and Student Affairs



Blackboard Learn™ Addressed All of LIM College’s Needs

Although other distance learning systems were considered and reviewed, the choice of Blackboard Learn for LIM College’s learning system was a “foregone conclusion,” according to Adam Rosen, LIM College’s Director of Academic Administration. “We don’t have a lot of in-house expertise or technical infrastructure, so we chose to have Blackboard host the entire system. We can rely on Blackboard Managed Hosting Services to provide and maintain all the software, hardware, and support—the whole package,” he said.

Other factors that influenced LIM College’s decision were the number of successful Blackboard implementations at a broad range of academic institutions and a 90-day trial period that allowed faculty to experiment with the system.

Blackboard Managed Hosting Solution Meant a Trouble-Free Launch and Immediate Results

Once the decision to implement the Blackboard solution was made, it took only 30 days to develop the LIM College Prior Learning Assessment and Portfolio Development course, which assesses students’ work experience and

awards rigorously evaluated academic credit through distance learning. Shortly thereafter, several hybrid courses were also developed.

“We had students online within weeks of launching the solution,” said Rosen. He added that even though the college has had problems with its own internal servers, because LIM College is taking advantage of Blackboard Managed Hosting, the learning system has remained unaffected.

The online and hybrid offerings have created numerous benefits:

- ▶ Expanded reach without additional “bricks and mortar”
- ▶ Immediate access to a new revenue stream (continuing adult education) with minimal expense
- ▶ The ability to provide learning opportunities to students unable to attend traditional classes onsite
- ▶ Reinforced relationships with alumni as potential donors

The availability of online classes has also improved student satisfaction by freeing them from having to be onsite during the “prime time” 9 am to 4 pm timeframe. This is a critical factor in metropolitan New York City, where students may commute several hours to and from school, making early morning, late afternoon and evening classes difficult to attend. An additional benefit is that the online classes have increased room capacity for other students who prefer to attend classes in a traditional face-to-face setting.



In response to the successful launch and benefits, Dr. Rolle said, “Blackboard Learn has helped us drive additional revenue streams and define strategies that would not have been possible otherwise.”

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