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Oct01

[Michelle](#)

[Online Learning Awards and one year at UNS...](#)

I've been feeling a little nostalgic this week as I come upon my one-year anniversary with University News. I love my beat and the people here. So many stories, so little time!

And one story I was covering this week had special meaning:

I spent the afternoon with former co-workers from Online Learning at their annual Online Learning Exemplary Teaching Awards ceremony, and I had one of those 'a-ha' moments you sometimes have when remembering back.

When distance learning first came about, people thought that bricks and mortar campuses would go the way of the dodo or dinosaur. Fortunately, traditional education is steadfast (like bricks) but also evolving. Residential campuses work, lectures work...but throw in a little technology, and you have the makings of a learning monument that is as multidimensional as the Sentinel.



Educational technologies today have improved well beyond the standard power point presentation. The sophistication of classroom technologies include multi-screen facilities and inter-connected laptop computers at each student desk so that all members of the class can participate in demonstrations and learning. Course management systems allow for hybrid-style, in-class and online 'meetings.' All seem to say education can be done differently and successfully.

(Photo of Professor Richard Doolittle accepting one of the Online Learning Staff Choice Awards for innovative use of technology in the new TLT Studio, formerly A400 in the Wallace Library.)

Because of the strength of the OLL team—the earliest members to the current team—RIT was recognized as one of the largest and best distance learning programs. Faculty lectures were taped in the early days and distributed to students all over the country and around the world. Over the years, the tapes were refined to CD-ROM, many lectures were incorporated into the online course management software, *myCourses*. Online Learning staff lead the charge to incorporate technology in all aspects of coursework, whether online or supporting on campus courses.



What people may not know is the online courses are also open to on campus students and a good percentage of these students supplement their coursework with online classes. The flexibility they offer is only second to the strength of the coursework itself. Many naysayers to online learning think that the medium dilutes the information and learning. Nope. The coursework, especially at RIT, is as rigorous as in the classroom.

(Photo of Lecturer Lisa Greenwood receiving the 2009 Exemplary Online Faculty Award for 2009.)

At the Exemplary Teaching Awards ceremony this week, I recalled where the department had been and where it is now. If you haven't had a chance to visit the group, they are located on the lower level of the library, stop by and say hello. And the new TLT classroom is outstanding. If you haven't seen it, here's a [virtual tour](#).

While Online Learning celebrated current faculty who have made their mark in cyberspace, I'd like to salute the OLL team for making their own mark, supporting the many faculty and students who enjoy such a unique learning space.

... and, on a personal note, I'm enjoying a new job without having to relinquish connections to the old...you can't beat that...

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1. [Bob Finnerty](#)
Oct02

Love the virtual tour! And congrats on surviving UNS for one year :-)

2. [Paul Stella](#)
Oct02

Well put, Michelle.

3. [Michael Starenk](#)
Oct02

Thank you so much, Michelle, for your thoughtful and encouraging words about the growth and maturation of distance/online education at RIT. Alas, "Online Learning" no longer exists as an organizational unit at RIT. With this summer's merger of Wallace Libraries and Teaching and Learning Services, "Online Learning" has morphed into two new entities: one is Academic Technology, the other is Teaching, Learning & Scholarship services.

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