Abstract

Popular Electronic Conferencing Use and Comparison

James R. Mallory

RIT's College of Applied Science and Technology (CAST) and the National Technical Institute for the Deaf (NTID) have been using interactive electronic conferencing software for many years with both deaf and hearing, on-campus and Distance Learning (DL) student populations. These two colleges have gained valuable experience with three electronic conferencing software products. These products include First Class, Black Board and Prometheus. This software was used within NTID's Applied Computer Technology department and CAST's Electrical/Telecommunications department in computer programming and Telecommunications courses. The wide variety of class demographics included all deaf, all hearing and deaf/hearing mainstreamed student audiences in both traditional and DL courses, with both traditional college students and adult learners. This paper will present the advantages of integrating electronic conferencing into the classroom in general, as well as reviewing the pros and cons of each of the above named products from a student perspective, a pedagogical perspective and from a user-friendly implementation perspective as an instructor. Our findings will be presented and then we will entertain an interactive discussion with the audience about our findings and experience. The audience will be invited to share their experiences related to this technology.