

## **Section 5b, Web-based Research and Instruction Final Report – Sharon Gray**

I attended the following WebCT "virtual workshops" during November, 2004:

### **Fundamentals of WebCT Campus Edition 4 System Integration**

This workshop was focused upon WebCT system administration. I found it very helpful, since my initial "training" in system administration of WebCT consisted of a half-day training session with the WebCT salesperson/trainer who came to campus to help us with our system configuration at least 4 years ago. That training, while valuable, didn't address many of the issues I've encountered as I've actually been the WebCT system administrator. I gleaned valuable information about file systems, optimizing performance, log analysis, disaster recovery, backup strategies, managing upgrades, applying patches, and managing security.

While this workshop probably won't have direct impact upon individual WebCT course content and/or teaching, it will most certainly impact our many WebCT courses by making me a better system administrator and enabling me to manage the WebCT server more effectively.

### **Designing with WebCT's Vista 3.0**

This workshop, which began with a 3-hour synchronous session followed by a two-week-long (it was initially planned to be a one-week-long asynchronous workshop, but the participants lobbied for additional time) asynchronous workshop. This workshop was particularly valuable since it explored the WebCT product that is a step beyond the one we are using. It allowed me to explore the possibilities and see if Vista might be of use to us. It turns out that the "benefits" of moving to Vista do not appear to outweigh the drawbacks and expense. The workshop helped me to explore Vista by actually using it as a student and as a course designer. I was able to determine that the product does not offer Augustana any real benefit. We, therefore, will likely remain with our current configuration. We may even look into going with an open source course management system such as Moodle, which costs nothing (at this point.) Much thought and planning will need to go into the decision of whether or not to make such a transition, since we have so many courses currently using WebCT and so many instructors already familiar with WebCT. I did gain information on selective release and on action plans for continued improvement of online courses which I expect will be very useful in my own classes as well as for those instructors with whom I come in contact.

I have integrated some of the information I learned during this workshop into my COSC 250, Social Legal, and Ethical Issues, class and into my COSC 100 courses, specifically COSC 101, Spreadsheet Applications. The storyboarding feature allows the designer to conceptualize how students progress through the material. Selective release allows the designer to open up sections of the course material only after students have met particular criteria. It can even be designed to tailor release of material based upon specific measures or milestones. Students seem very pleased with the ability to progress through the material at their own pace, receiving feedback and practice for those areas where they need it.

I encouraged students to take practice tests in preparation for the final test. I didn't require students to take the practice tests, but those who DID take the practice tests tended to score exceptionally well on the final test. Overall, final test scores for last semester were comparable to previous years, but students appreciated the ability to test themselves in preparation for the real test and those students who did take advantage of that feature seemed to do very well on the final. It could be that those students were simply "go-getters" and would have done well regardless of whether or not they took the practice tests. But, they appreciated the opportunity to make sure they knew the material.