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DELTA

Distance Education & Learning Technologies for Academics



Distance Education Online Handbook

for

SHSU Faculty

Revised—Fall 2009

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Mission Statement

The mission of DELTA (**Distance Education & Learning Technologies for Academics**) at Sam Houston State University is to: (1) provide a single point of presence for distance learning degree programs and courses offered by Sam Houston State University; (2) provide high quality course development and support services for faculty and students taking courses via distance learning; (3) coordinate the delivery and support of asynchronous and synchronous distance education degree programs and courses; (4) market Sam Houston State University online degree programs and courses in Texas, nationally, and internationally; (5) improve the quality of distance learning products and services through rigorous assessment efforts and continuous quality improvement; (6) provide design, implementation and operational support for interactive video courses, videoconferencing, streaming video, video production and classroom technology; (7) review and recommend instructional software applications for academic use.

Vision Statement

DELTA supports faculty, students, and staff in the creative utilization of distance education and learning technologies in teaching, research, and community service. DELTA integrates state-of-the-art advancements in distance education and instructional technology to compliment the academic programs of the university and enrich the learning experience.



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SHSU Course Management Systems

As a faculty member at SHSU, you will have access to the following systems:

Blackboard Learning System (*Available until Fall 2010*)

- This course management system allows faculty to build online courses and make course materials available to students via the web. Faculty can:
 - Access/upload materials relevant to your courses. (syllabi, lecture notes, assignments, etc.).
 - Collaborate electronically with students
 - Create and administer online assessments.

eCollege Learning Management System (*Available now*)

- This learning management system allows faculty to create online courses and make course materials available to students via the web. Functionality allows faculty to:
 - Present lectures and PowerPoint slides.
 - Facilitate and monitor discussions for all courses.
 - Assess homework, quizzes, exams, and class participation.
 - Establish and oversee student groups.
 - Provide virtual office hours for students.
 - Encourage reflective “journaling”.
 - Conduct guest lecture chat sessions.

Ultimately, it is important to make sure the “**ah ha**” moments you create in F-2-F classes are somehow facilitated online.

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New User Accounts

First time Logging in?

First time SHSUOnline access is granted by the use of your **SHSU computer account username and your SamID** (without a dash). You can create and activate your computer account via SamWeb.

Your username is your initials followed by a three digit number. Your password is your *SamID*. The *SamID* is a seven-digit number that identifies you at SHSU.

Username: abc000

Password: *****

Experiencing problems Logging in?

If you experience any problems creating your account, activating your account or logging in, please contact the SHSUOnline Helpdesk via email or call **1.877.870.9214**.



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eCollege Course Types

There are three course types in eCollege:

- **eCompanion** – eCompanion helps instructors supplement their traditional classes with online content and tools. eCompanion enhances classroom-based courses by broadening the class experience and increasing the access of course materials to all students. Through course tools, such as Threaded Discussions, Document Sharing and Journaling, eCompanion provides many avenues to improve student communication and collaboration in an asynchronous environment.
- **Hybrid** – the Hybrid (or Blended) course product has all of the features of an eCourse (see below) and is meant to be used with any course in which in-class “seat time” is replaced in part by required online class time.
- **eCourse** – eCourse is built specifically for complete online courses. eCollege designed its eCourse product to support the way instructors teach and students learn. By leveraging a unit-based design, instructors have the ability to chunk content, activities and assessments. This design promotes an intuitive navigation for both instructors and students. Courses can be organized to suit personal teaching styles in a fully online course. Through course tools, such as Threaded Discussions, Document Sharing, Journaling, and a robust whiteboard, eCourse provides many avenues to improve learning, communication, and content delivery through both synchronous and asynchronous methods.



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eCollege Components and Tools

Following are some of the most commonly used eCollege components and tools:

- **Course Homepage** – The Course Homepage is the first page you and your students see when logging into your course. This is the "door" to your course, or the starting point. The Course Homepage will contain introductory material that you add as well as the following elements:
 - **Announcements** – you can post messages to the entire class.
 - **What's New** – you can see the student activity since you last entered the course.
 - **Course Checklist** – it links to a "checklist" for students, displaying currently assigned tasks.
- **Syllabus** – The Syllabus will contain important course information, instructor contact information, grading policies, and perhaps a course schedule with assignments and due dates. Students can print out the Syllabus for a handy reference to the course. Your online course Syllabus will include many of the same elements you would include in a traditional classroom-based Syllabus, such as:
 - Course Description;
 - Course Objectives;
 - General Course Policies and Procedures;
 - Grading Policies;
 - Course Textbook(s); and
 - any other course specific information. For example:
 - Your picture and biographical information
 - Your email address
 - Contact info for technical assistance
 - Notes about online "Netiquette"

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eCollege Components and Tools – cont.

- **Course Admin** – You can change or modify administrative information from the *Course Admin* tab in the Course Management Toolbar at the top of your course page. This is a Course Tool that students don't see because it gives you the ability to:
 - Edit **General Information & Settings** (including titling your "units," selecting a title for the course instructor, allowing long unit or content item names to "wrap" to a second line, and setting time zone and country/language if allowed by the institution).
 - Set **Style Manager**. **Note:** this is commonly done at the institutional level.
 - **Enable/Disable Tools** in the course toolbar. All tools in the course management toolbar may be disabled and the tab removed from view.
 - Edit **Threaded Discussion Preferences**. Set Discussion content items to "read only" and/or allow students to edit posts in all Discussions.
 - Set dates using **Course Scheduler**. Units or Content Items may be "scheduled" to be blocked before or after a set date. **Note:** this tool has been moved from the Calendar function in the previous system.
 - Have access to full student information through the **Course Enrollment** area, including such information as enrollment date, student or dropped status, time zone, etc.
 - Set up and manage Groups in **Group Management**. When groups are established the system automatically sets up a group designation in course tools such as email, chat and doc sharing.

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eCollege Components and Tools – cont.

Gradebook – The online Gradebook is a place to record and keep track of letter and/or numeric grades. It is also a powerful communication tool where you can provide students with comments and guidance on their work.

- You have the ability to set up which assignments and activities will be counted toward a final course grade. Once you **set up** "gradable" items and corresponding points, the Gradebook will automatically tally up grades to date, as points are entered. You also have the ability to turn off the point system and enter letter grades only, if you so desire.
- Gradebook **Special Features** allow you to "**weight**" graded items (when using points) and to distribute weights, identify an item as "**extra credit**," and to "**exclude an item**" from the course grade--such as a practice quiz or self-check quiz.
- The Gradebook is linked to the **Dropbox**, so any grades recorded through the Dropbox will automatically be pulled--and noted by a small icon--to applicable areas in the Gradebook.
- The Gradebook is also directly linked to the **Exam Builder**. Exams that are set up with point properties will automatically be graded and pulled to the Gradebook, for you and your students to view. (**Note:** students can only view graded exams after the Review Date you have designated.)
- Also, in the Gradebook area, you'll have access to **User Activity**.
- You can export the information from the Gradebook in your online course into another program. In View Gradebook, you will find an **Export This View** button. **Exam Statistics** can be accessed via a link in the Gradebook.

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eCollege Components and Tools – cont.

Email — The **Email** tool is a convenient and effective way for you and your students to communicate with each other. When users are enrolled in an eCollege course, their email addresses are uploaded into that course.

The Email tool is an **outgoing** email only feature. You do not receive course email within the course. When you or your students send an email using this tool, it goes to the addressee's own email address (such as an AOL or Yahoo account.) You may email individual students, the entire class, or groups of students. Your students can email you through this feature and you will receive these emails at your own email address. Any time an email message is sent, the sender is automatically sent a copy of the message.

Email Attachments – For best results in reading email attachments, all class members should use the same word processing programs that you use, especially if formatting is an important part of your assignments. However, this will not be possible for many classes, and there are several ways to get around compatibility problems in email attachments.

- In the first week of class send an introductory email message to all students with an attachment to see if they can read it. You may also want to ask them to send you an attachment to see if you can read theirs.
- Ask students to send attachments in Rich Text Format (.rtf). RTF files will be readable by all (or most) systems.
- Instead of asking for attachments, ask that students highlight the text of their entire document, copy it, and then paste it directly into their email text box.
- Require students to use only programs you are using.

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eCollege Components and Tools – cont.

The eCollege system offers two synchronous (real-time) communication tools: Chat and ClassLive. Both of these tools can be found within the **Live** tab in the Course Management Toolbar.

Chat – The Chat tool is a basic, synchronous communication tool. There is a default main Chatroom when you first enter Chat. However, you may create as many chatrooms as you like. If you create groups for team activities, the group designation appears in the Chat tool automatically. Each chat that takes place is automatically archived, though you may turn off the archive feature if you don't want conversations made public.

In a Chat, each participant's name will be listed alongside his/her comments. Participants may send each other private messages as the chat proceeds. You can choose to ignore a user who is not acting appropriately. Chat participants may also enter URL's or web addresses for websites. Then the users can click on the URL posted in the chat. This will open a new browser window, and the entire group can view the website and discuss it. To summarize:

- View chat logs, which are archived chats from the course. Students may also view chat logs.
- Create separate Chatrooms for different purposes or groups. The rooms can be made private, non-archived rooms.
- Send private messages to an individual participant.
- "Follow" one another to Web sites related to the course discussion.

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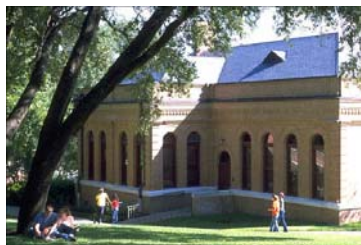
eCollege Components and Tools – cont.

ClassLive – ClassLive, powered by Elluminate, is a robust synchronous learning tool that contains a whiteboard, graphing capability and much more. ClassLive offers many instructional options. Here are just a few ideas on using it in your online class:

- You can conduct tutoring and/or office hour sessions online and archive them.
- With the advanced ClassLive Pro version you have the ability to speak directly to your students and also grant them permission to speak as well. Note that students would need a headset with microphone.
- With ClassLive Pro you also can share applications and desktops.

Whiteboard Tool and Features

- You have full control over the chat and whiteboard rights of all users in a session.
- Your students have the ability to "raise a hand" to signify to you that they have a question or need assistance.
- You may upload multiple files (like PowerPoints) to the session and share them with the class.
- ClassLive is equipped with a graphing calculator, allowing you and your students to work on equations and then share them with the rest of the class.



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eCollege Components and Tools – cont.

Document Sharing – There are two basic functions in **Document Sharing**: uploading a file and downloading a file. The Document Sharing tool allows you to upload files—documents, images, spreadsheets, slide-shows, HTML pages, etc.—into your course from your computer. Or, you may download a file, which already has been uploaded into Document Sharing, to your computer.

Students have the same functionality. Both you and your students have access to shared files, but only instructors can delete files. Students can choose to share documents with the entire class or only with you, the instructor. To see how a student interacts with the tool, select **Doc Sharing** presentation.

Troubleshooting Tip: Document Sharing files have compatibility issues just like email attachments. Document Sharing files are only viewable if you have a program that reads the uploaded file. Make sure you can view your students' file formats, and they yours, at the beginning of the course. You can also ask your students to save their files in .rtf (rich text format) to circumvent some compatibility problems. Rich Text Format is readable by nearly all word processing programs. However, some formatting in original documents may be lost, so it's best if everyone in the course is using the same kinds of programs when using Document Sharing.

The Document Sharing tool is usually a public place to share work, though students can submit work for only you to view. Document Sharing can be used as a place for sharing data sets or solutions for students, workshopping essays for peer critique, and sharing final group papers or presentations.

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eCollege Components and Tools – cont.

Dropbox – The purpose of the **Dropbox** is to provide a central location where your students can submit and retrieve assignments. Once you've graded and returned the activities, the grade appears in the Gradebook. One of the largest benefits of the Dropbox is that it can reduce the amount of course-related email significantly. Think of the Dropbox as a virtual "Inbox" and "Outbox" for course assignments:

- You pick up or retrieve submitted assignments from your students in your **Inbox**.
- You return or send graded assignments back to your students through your **Outbox**.

Your Dropbox, as noted above, is also linked directly to the Gradebook, which makes it easy to open an assignment, grade it, and then record the student's grade directly into the Gradebook—all from one place.

Students can open a graded item from either the Dropbox or from the Gradebook and see their grade for that item. You can also attach files and documents to assignments when you return them to students.



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eCollege Components and Tools – cont.

Journal – The **Journal** is a one-on-one, student-teacher communication tool. It also is a place for confidential student writing and reflection, as students have the option to make a Journal entry private.

The online Journal can be used like a traditional journal, requiring students to make regular entries reflecting on issues germane to a course. It may also be a place to ask students to submit informal assignments or weekly self-assessments. To see how a student interacts with the tool, select Journal presentation. The Journal tool allows you to comment on each Journal entry.

In your Syllabus, you may want to suggest that your students compose Journal entries while offline, in their word processing programs probably, and then save their work to disk. They can then copy and paste their text into the Journal. Although this may seem like an extra step, your students will benefit in two ways:

1. They will have a record of their work after the course ends.
2. Writing offline will save them possible frustration from losing work if they get timed-out of the course as they are writing. (The system doesn't recognize typing as activity in the course. Only clicks on links register as activity, and if a student takes more than 45 minutes composing, s/he will be timed-out and will lose all the work composed during that time period.)

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eCollege Components and Tools – cont.

Webliography – The **Webliography** course tool allows you and your students to work together to create an actively linked, annotated bibliography of World Wide Web (www) sites that are relevant to your course.

Both you and your students can submit sites to the **Webliography**. You can organize the **Webliography** into categories. You can sort **Webliography** entries by the date they were submitted, by category, or by the person who submitted the entry. To see how a student interacts with the tool, select **Webliography** presentation.

The **Webliography** is useful for the instructor to post Internet sites that will be references during the course. An even greater use of the **Webliography** is to ask your students to post Web sites. Students can greatly increase their knowledge of the course by submitting Web sites they have found and reviewed. But more importantly, this empowers them to contribute to the learning community of their course. **Webliography** assignments encourage students to customize their own learning by following directions that particularly interest them.

By writing annotations to the sites that they submit, students begin to develop media literacy. Many instructors ask their students to address issues of a site's credibility in the annotations of **Webliography** entries. If students are asked to post sources they have used in their papers, possibilities of plagiarism are reduced. Some instructors will make **Webliography** entries a significant part of the final course grade. The **Gradebook** automatically lists **Webliography** as a gradable item.

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