



Blair Sheppard, dean of Duke's Fuqua School, leads a recent CEO Master Class in Duke's new telepresence-equipped lecture hall. This meeting connected the Duke campus in Durham, North Carolina, with locations in San Jose, California, and New Delhi, India.

Tapping into Telepresence

Imagine a network of technologically interconnected classrooms at universities in dozens of countries. Within such a network, students and faculty could meet face-to-face, even though they are thousands of miles apart. Faculty could teach courses across multiple time zones in real time; students could choose from a nearly endless course catalog; and executives could guest lecture to not just one class, but several, without leaving their home cities.

Educators are trying to form just such a network using telepresence, a technology that facilitates face-to-face meetings via rooms equipped with high-definition television screens, distributed video cameras and microphones, and carefully

placed lighting. Cisco is the most prominent vendor of this technology, with its TelePresence product, but other companies like PolyCom and Tandberg are also in the market.

As of last fall, more than 35 higher education institutions had partnered with Cisco to adopt TelePresence. Among them were Duke University's Fuqua School of Business in Durham, North Carolina, and the University of South Carolina's Moore School of Business in Columbia.

Duke University's new lecture room was created with the help of IVCi, a New York-based company that specializes in telepresence room designs. The space includes 103-inch plasma displays and six

cameras that provide both panoramic and life-size video. The podium is equipped with two document cameras, three displays that allow instructors to view remote classrooms, and 66 push-to-talk microphones to allow interactive discussions.

The room was inaugurated in February with a CEO Master Class that linked the Durham campus with locations in San Jose, California, and New Delhi, India. Fuqua professor Tony O'Driscoll and four students connected from India; John Chambers, Cisco's Chairman and CEO, and John Doerr, a partner in the venture capital firm Kleiner Perkins Caufield & Byers, connected from California.

The telepresence lecture hall “eliminates barriers of distant collaboration,” says Tracy Futhey, Duke’s CIO and vice president of information technology. It takes blended learning a step further, he adds, by “allowing us to extend the educational experience around the globe while maintaining high levels of in-person classroom interaction.”

In February, the University of South Carolina’s Moore School began using the technology in its Professional MBA program. The school also will use the platform in its executive and graduate degree programs, including its master in international business and executive master in higher education management.

There is great potential for telepresence to transform the delivery of higher education, says Raymond Smith, associate dean of executive education at the Moore School. But the technology may require some adjustments to be ideal for the classroom.

For instance, telepresence technology was originally designed for business meetings including only a few individuals connecting remotely. To accommodate large numbers of students and faculty in geographically distributed locations, Cisco is working with educational partners like the Moore School to fine-tune the technology for education.

“We want to create an environment that accommodates at least 15 to 20 people remotely,” says Smith. “We also want professors to be free to move about the room as they would in a normal classroom.” He’d like to see screens positioned so that the professor can call on a student in Saudi Arabia or Germany as eas-

ily as he can someone at a desk in front of him.

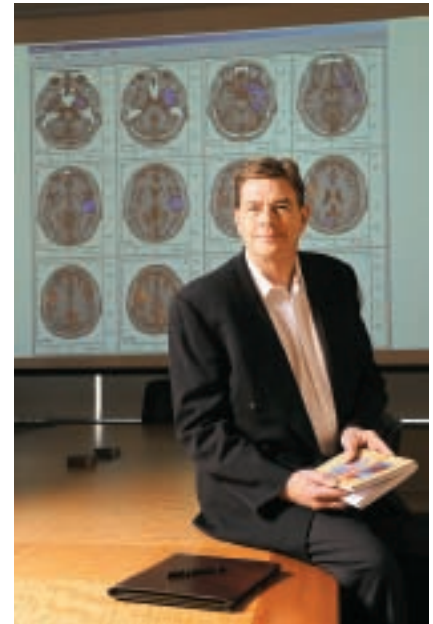
Finally, the technology ideally would be adaptable to existing traditional classrooms to encourage widespread adoption by a large number of schools. “Most universities cannot afford to build a new facility for this,” Smith says.

Smith has been visiting European schools to talk with their representatives about expanding the network of telepresence learning environments. He sees telepresence opening up new possibilities not only for learning, but also for collaborative research, corporate partnerships, and student recruitment.

The technology helps a school “put learning where the action is,” Smith says. “As a professor, I can ask a team of students in Germany to tackle a problem from a German perspective and a team of students in the U.S. to tackle it from an American perspective. Or, I can ask students from the U.S., China, and Germany to meet in a virtual room and tackle it from a global perspective. We can do all of this without anyone jumping on a plane or staying in a hotel.”

This technology comes at the right time for executive education, Smith emphasizes. Executives want to decrease travel costs and time spent in the classroom, while increasing the speed with which they can apply what they learn to their jobs. This is true whether a company is 300 or 3,000 miles from campus, Smith adds.

“Companies in South Carolina are telling us that they don’t want their people to drive two hours to go to class. They’re asking if there’s a way for us to connect multiple sites across the state,” he says. “Our answer, now, is ‘Yes.’”



■ Making (Brain) Waves In Marketing

The human brain holds a mine of information useful to marketers—and Terry Childers, a marketing professor at Iowa State University’s College of Business in Ames, wants to take a closer look. Childers is now seeking funding for a new lab on the ISU campus that’s designed to analyze consumers’ brain waves as they make purchasing decisions.

Childers specializes in research related to neuromarketing, which refers to the study of consumers’ level of consciousness when they decide to buy. The proposed lab, which Childers hopes will be operational by the fall semester, will use an electrophysiological process similar to the electroencephalogram, or EEG, that doctors use to record brain activity.

For this research, subjects wear a cap fitted with electrodes connected to a machine that captures their brain signals. “We then monitor what areas of the brain are firing to perform certain functions,” Childers explains.

To design the lab and train technicians, Childers is consulting

with ISU's facilities planning and management department, as well as Rob West, an associate professor of psychology and director of the school's cognitive psychology program to assist with the special considerations such a lab requires. For example, the walls of West's own cognitive psychology lab are lined with copper to prevent outside electrical signals from interfering with equipment.

Because these kinds of studies are time-intensive, requiring two to three hours per individual to conduct, both departments will benefit from having access to two facilities and two sets of expertise, says Childers.

In addition to studying purchasing decisions, Childers also plans to use the lab for research into emotional intelligence—particularly the ability to understand and manage emotions during decision making—as it relates to obesity.

Companies Need Help With Social Networks

While organizations realize the importance of social networking, most have little idea about how to use it effectively, according to a study conducted by IESE Business School in Spain; Rochester Institute of Technology's Saunders College of Business in the United States; and Henley Business School in the United Kingdom. The three institutions conducted this research—the first of two parts—on behalf of Cisco in San Jose, California.

Researchers surveyed 105 participants who represented 97 organizations in 20 countries. Seventy-five percent of respondents indicated that their firms use consumer-based social media such as Facebook, while about

50 percent also use microblogging sites such as Twitter.

However, only one in seven respondents said that their companies have instituted a formal process for using these tools for business purposes. Only one in five respondents said that their companies have policies in place regarding the use of social media. And only one in ten said that their IT departments have any direct involvement in external social networking initiatives.

Many respondents noted that their companies still overlook or misunderstand the risks involved with social networking, and they have not yet defined who owns the rights to materials generated through the practice.

The study highlighted just how much companies need to develop best practices for social network-

ing media, what initiatives are most effective, and how employee use of these technologies should be managed, says Evgeny Kaganer, a lead researcher in the study and assistant professor at IESE.

Organizations that ignore the increasing influence of social networking risk their employees' misuse of the technology, he says. That could potentially lead to the disclosure of unauthorized information or misrepresentation of the companies involved.

At the same time, the companies that master the art of social networking will reap the benefits of creating "meaningful connections" with their communities, says Neil Hair, a lead researcher and assistant professor of marketing at Saunders College. "Successful companies," he says, "are

NEWSBYTES

E-LEARNING CHALLENGE

AT&T recently announced its 2010 Big Mobile on Campus Challenge, a national contest that invites college students to design the next generation e-learning mobile application. The contest seeks entries that demonstrate usability, quality, innovation, utility, and marketability. AT&T will choose five finalists, whose schools will each receive complementary memberships to AT&T's Developer Program. The company will announce the winning entry during the EDUCAUSE Annual Conference in Anaheim, California, on October 12–15. The winning individual or team will receive a \$10,000 scholarship; two runners-up will each receive \$5,000 scholarships. The entry deadline is September 15.

For information, visit bigmobileoncampus.wireless.att.com.

THE VALUE OF ONLINE QUIZZES

Online quizzes do not improve student grades, according to a study by Harm-Jan Steenhuis and Brian



those that are tying tools together, managing scalability issues, anticipating the continued evolution of platforms, and using the preferred tools of their stakeholders.”

■ Tech’s Effects on Text

This year, seniors at Suffolk University’s Sawyer School of Management in Boston, Massachusetts, will be studying a phenomenon of great concern to many book publishers: How will digital technology change textbooks? As part of their capstone course, students will conduct research on the effects of this disruptive technology and then share their findings with textbook publishing companies.

The students have divided into teams, each representing different



stakeholders in the issue, including students, publishers, e-reader manufacturers such as Amazon and Sony, and entrepreneurs who may think of ideas that have not yet been realized.

Each team will conduct research and make strategic recommendations to help publishers succeed in the face of technology disruption. Students will draw on their accumulated knowledge of marketing, accounting, management, finance, personnel, and production, says Mitchell Weisberg, who designed and is teaching the course.

“For centuries we have seen technologies change industry, from the steam engine to Napster,” says

Weisberg. “These disruptions challenge existing strategies and create opportunities for established and emerging businesses to pursue new strategies.”

The teams will be equipped with different resources, including traditional printed textbooks; e-readers such as the digital Sony Reader Touch and Amazon’s Kindle DX; and CourseSmart, which allows students to access textbooks online to read, download, or print.

Weisberg expects to publish the study upon completion, and he is incorporating a topical blog and a wiki into the project. Students are asked to contribute to the wiki, which also is open to Amazon, Sony, the publisher that owns the current textbook content, and other publishers.

Grinder of Eastern Washington University’s College of Business and Public Administration in Spokane. The researchers compared the performance of students who used online quizzing to the performance of those who did not. While online quizzing allows professors to better manage large classes and evaluate student effort, the researchers found no significant difference between the two groups. Their study, “The use(lessness) of online quizzes for achieving student learning,” was published in the January 2010 issue of the *International Journal of Information and Operations Management Education*.

■ E-BOOK ON SUSTAINABILITY

Mark Esposito, management professor at Grenoble Ecole de Management in France, wanted to create a

book on sustainability that adopted the discipline’s own practice, so he has published *Strategies in Sustainable Travel and Tourism* as an e-book. A review of the trends, opportunities, and responsibilities related to eco-tourism, the e-book is a way to disseminate knowledge in a more agile way, says Esposito. “It is environmentally friendly, has low production cost, and can be sold at a lower price,” he notes. The Kindle edition of the e-book can be purchased and downloaded for \$10 on Amazon.com. Proceeds will support the Slovenian Institute for the Development of Social Responsibility.

■ ONLINE EXEC ED CERTIFICATE

Thunderbird School of Global Management in Glendale, Arizona, will offer an Executive Certificate

in Global Negotiations, the first online instructor-facilitated certificate program in its executive certificate portfolio. The course has three eight-week modules, which include cross-cultural communication, essentials of global negotiations, and managing conflict with a global mindset.

■ BLOG ON PRICING

The University of Rochester’s Simon Graduate School of Business in New York is adding a blog called “The Pricing Connection” to its online offerings. Located at www.pricingconnection.com, the blog is presented by the Simon School Center for Pricing and will be written by current Simon MBAs under the direction of Greg Shaffer, professor of economics and management, as well as marketing. □