

# Distance Learning Systems

## Teaching Tips #1: The Distance Education Technology Toolbox

Most instructors have discovered, whether through experience or word of mouth, that there is a sometimes bewildering array of instructional technology available to enhance and supplement course delivery.

In this inaugural *Teaching Tips* weekly mailing, we would like to take a few moments to provide a synopsis of tools that are available to you, and provide some context for more information to come.

**Blackboard** (<http://classes.uaf.edu/>) — Blackboard is the primary, web-based Learning Management System (LMS) employed at UAF. Operated by the UAF Center for Academic Technology, Blackboard provides a suite of secure, asynchronous course tools including materials and document delivery, gradebook, discussion boards, and online quizzes and surveys. Blackboard is the primary portal for students to access primary materials or be linked to other educational technology resources.

**Horizon Live** (<http://live.dist-ed.uaf.edu/>) — Horizon Live provides a synchronous Internet component for course delivery. It may be used in conjunction with Blackboard materials as well as videoconference and/or audioconference presentations. Horizon Live includes tools for presenting PowerPoint presentations, images, and web materials accompanied by real-time two-way audio using a single internet connection of robust 28.8k or higher bandwidth. It also provides a shared whiteboard, polling, surveying, and other tools which are still being tested by DLS.

**Videoconferencing** — The University has spent considerable effort implementing a network for two-way videoconferencing, including “quality of service” guarantees. This enables real-time, two-way videoconference using dedicated equipment ranging in size from desktop cameras to full-room installations, some paired with Internet display. Videoconferences can include multiple points at each MAU, including the four CRA extended campuses, as well as many schools in villages serviced by GCI. Although this technology does not extend beyond the University network, it provides a great new way to reach a sizable group of students.

**Audioconferencing** — The traditional Alaskan distance education workhorse, particularly for smaller sites serviced by the College of Rural Alaska, audioconference is a tried and true technology that will remain a part of instruction for many years to come. At DLS, we are creating ways to pedagogically improve audioconference delivery by integrating other technologies and to transform the curriculum—in whole or in part—to accommodate other delivery models.

**Smartboard?** — “Smartboard” installations combine dedicated videoconferencing display with a 67” touch screen monitor and an Internet ready computer. This allows an instructor to simultaneously utilize any of the technologies outlined above when delivering to students on the network that also have access to either a Smartboard or another videoconference endpoint and computer. Currently, CDE has placed Smartboard installations in Bethel, Dillingham, Kotzebue, Nome, and on the Fairbanks Campus in the Brooks Building.

For more Teaching Tips and other Distance Education information, please visit the Center for Distance Education Distance Learning Systems website at:  
<http://distance.uaf.edu/resources/dls/>