

Wimba and Web Conferencing for Instruction (Session Overview)

By the end of this session you should:

- Have a clear understanding of the basic functionality of web-based conferencing tools.
- Identify potentially meaningful uses of web conferencing to support teaching and learning.
- Set up a Wimba Classroom for both class use and guest access
- Be able to determine the most appropriate tool to match your instructional context and objectives.

Key Questions

- What are the instructional advantages / disadvantages of web based collaboration?
- Are there compelling uses of web tools that can support new opportunities for teaching and learning?

Session Overview

The primary tool for web conferencing built in to our Blackboard LMS is [Wimba Classroom](#). It features a live, virtual class environment in which faculty and students can display and share content, from powerpoints to websites to software such as Excel. It has a built-in “whiteboard” as well as a chat area. Faculty can monitor and control audio and video links from students. For instance, if too many people are trying to talk, faculty can on-the-fly disable all student microphones and then enable selected students as they raise their virtual hands.

Features in Wimba Classroom include:

- Engage in two-way audio (students can use a headset (recommended) or a phone)
- Deliver presentation in PowerPoint and a range of other graphic formats
- Engage in public / private text chat
- Share desktop applications for demonstration and instructional purposes
- Push web pages to participants
- Use a live whiteboard for drawing and annotation
- Conduct real time polls and surveys
- Build lessons to be accessed and delivered directly from Blackboard
- Archive sessions for later review by both those who were present and those absent

Blackboard is used as a front end to build and deliver Wimba Classroom, It can be accessed in the COMMUNICATIONS area of the menu. If it is going to be routinely used, it would be a good idea to add a menu button using the ADD TOOL LINK function in Manage Course Menu in the Control Panel.

Wimba provides [frequent online workshops](#) on successfully using Wimba Classroom. In order to talk online in *Live Classroom*, you and your students will need a computer headset with microphone. Headsets are available from stores like Office Depot, Best Buy, Target or Wal-Mart. Expect to pay between \$15 and \$20 for a mini-plug headset or \$30 - \$90 for a **USB headset**, which is recommended. We have not found that the more

Center for Teaching Excellence (Fall 2010)

expensive headsets work any better than the less expensive ones, just be sure the headset that you purchase is made for use with your computer – cell phone and radio headsets will not work properly.

Help desk technical support is being provided by our corporate partner, Wimba. You can contact their help desk 24/7 at the following toll free number: (1.866.350.4978)

- Wimba Classroom – <http://www.wimba.com/support/instructors.php>
- Pronto - http://www.wimba.com/products/wimba_pronto/
- Google Chat - <http://www.google.com/chat/video> (one-to-one)
- TinyChat - <http://tinychat.com/> (up to 12 people)
- Commercial Products (\$\$\$)
 - DimDim – <http://www.dimdim.com>
 - Presentation, Whiteboard, Video w up to 50 people
 - Archiving available
 - Starts at \$19 a month
 - OoVoo – <http://www.oovoo.com>
 - Limited to 6 participants
 - Audio, Video, recording
 - 10 cents per minute per participant or \$40 a month
 - Adobe Connect – <http://www.Adobe.com/ConnectPro>
 - Screensharing, content management, record
 - \$55 a month

Contact Information

Britt Watwood (bwatwood@vcu.edu)

Jeff Nugent (jsnugent@vcu.edu)