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TOTAL OF 947  
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ROLLED IN FY  
'07 AND AC-  
COUNTED FOR  
1,135 TOTAL  
COURSE REG-  
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INSIDE THIS  
ISSUE:

Challenges in |  
Online  
Learning

High School |  
Students  
Enroll in CALS  
Distance  
Education  
Classes

Instructor's | 2  
Tool Box—  
PowerPoint  
Tips

Benefits of | 2  
Online  
Learning to  
Employers

Distance Edu- | 2  
cation Grants  
Awarded Fall  
07

Bringing the  
classroom  
to the world!

# Brenton Center

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## Challenges in Online Learning



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Education

The fact that the College of Agriculture & Life Sciences online learning program has been successful for many years does not mean that it has been free of challenges. There are many issues and challenges in online learning.

The **cost of online learning** in comparison to the cost of traditional classrooms has been the focus of several studies. Online programs may have some cost savings due to less need for physical classrooms and other facilities. These cost savings are often offset by the need for technology (hardware, software), support (technical, faculty, & student), and course development costs.

### High School Students Enroll in CALS Distance Education Classes

The College of Agriculture & Life Sciences is moving forward with a new initiative that will offer select courses to rural Iowa high school students under the Postsecondary Enrollment Options Act (PSEOA). This initiative will identify new and existing courses to be taught at a distance that would expose more high school students to the exciting and varied applications of agricultural sciences.

A pilot project involving the Chicago High School of Agricultural Sciences was completed Spring '06. Ten students successfully completed Agronomy 114. Four of those students

The Brenton Center and the College of Agriculture & Life Sciences has invested \$970,000 in distance education since 2002. This has been split between distance education course grants to faculty and departments in the amount of \$560,000 and technology (hardware & software) in the amount of \$410,000.

**Faculty participation** in online education has been consistently cited as an important issue in several studies. Typically cited are increased workloads and technology issues. The number of CALS faculty involved in distance education has seen steady growth since 2002. Currently every department (53 faculty) offer online courses.

FY '07 saw a significant increase (27.4%) in the number of courses taught by departments. Student credit hours in FY '07 reached an all-time high (2974) when compared to FY '04 (1887).

came to ISU and enrolled in the college. Currently, Dr. Gina McAndrews is completing a similar project with several Iowa high schools.

PSEOA student numbers are ranging from 15 to 20 students per semester. The majority are enrolled in Agronomy 114. Other courses that frequently have PSEOA students include: ENT 201, HORT 193, NREM 120, BIOL 155, FSHN 101, ECON 101. Occasionally high students living close to the university will enroll and participate in on-campus classes (ANS 114 Spring '08).

## Instructor's Tool Box—PowerPoint Tips



Faculty teaching distance education classes have a variety of tools they utilize. Many faculty have utilized PowerPoint presentations in their on-campus classrooms and continue to do so for their online classes. Using the right techniques helps make your on-campus or online class effective and a big success.

1. Readability is very important. The font should be large enough for viewing on a computer screen. Use common system fonts.
2. Stick to key points. This enhances your lecture and requires the students take notes as you discuss the key points on the slides.
3. Use clear titles on each slide. The title summarizes the purpose of the slide and should be a larger, bolder font that helps ensure the title stands out from the rest of the slide.
4. Use simple backgrounds. The background should not detract from the message of the slide. Text or diagrams should be easy to read.
5. Use graphs and diagrams. Visual images such as graphs or diagrams help make key points and provide some visual interest.
6. Stay organized. Make sure the information flows in the proper order.
7. Limit the number of slides. Keep the information on the slides short and concise. Consider keeping lectures to 20-25 minutes. This allows distance students to finish a topic if they have limited study time.
8. Speak clearly. Always speak clearly and to be as enthusiastic and interesting as possible.
9. Allow for questions. Allow online students to ask their questions using email or online chat sessions.
10. Provide for download. Many online students prefer to download your presentation. Post your presentation as an Adobe Reader file. This allows for a smaller file size and faster downloads. A "PDF" file also allows student to view or print your presentation on computers that may not have PowerPoint installed.

**“The Brenton Center provides support for effective use of technologies that contribute to enhancing teaching and learning in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences.”**

### Benefits of Online Learning to Employers:

- Gain competitive advantage by exposing employees to the latest advancements and information from leading educators and researchers.
- Strengthen the ability to attract and retain high-quality employees.
- Realize savings from reduced travel expenses and less time away from the job for education and training.
- Maintain employees in the work force while updating skills and knowledge toward targeted organizational goals. (Source: Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute)

**“Nearly one in five students now take at least one class online.”**  
Sloan Foundation

### Distance Education Grants Awarded Fall 2007

The following faculty received CALS Distance Education Grants for new courses:

1. Dr. Clark Ford / World Food Issues (AGRON 342)
2. Dr. Anna Butters-Johnson / Topics in Farm Animal Environmental Physiology, Behavior, Stress and Welfare (ANS 537A-F)
3. Dr. Jim Russell / Environmental Management of Livestock (ANS 421/521)
4. Dr. Jan Flora / Sustainable Communities (CD xxx)
5. Dr. Cornelia Butler Flora / Immigration & Community Inclusion (CD 535)
6. Dr. Henry Taber / Vegetable Crops Management (HORT 493)
7. Dr. Charles Schwab, Dr. Steven Freeman, James Wright / Legal Aspects of Occupational Safety & Health (TSM 372) / Occupational Safety (TSM370) / Introduction to Occupational Safety (TSM 272)

A total of \$69,000 was awarded for new course development.

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