

SCOFIELD
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Scofield is an Iowa State alumnus who earned his bachelor's, master's and doctorate degrees in agricultural education. He has played a role in the Brenton Center since it first opened in 1995. His background includes 13 years of experience in agribusiness management and five years as a high school agriculture teacher before joining the agricultural education and studies department in 1991.

The \$1.5 million facility was built with private funds and named in memory of W. Harold and Etta Brenton by family members who made the lead donation for the project. The Brentons were 1920 graduates of Iowa State.

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Bringing the
classroom
to the world!

Brenton Center

VOLUME 1, ISSUE 2

SPRING 2007

“Distance Education” is Our Mission



Gaylan Scofield, Ph.D.
**Director : Brenton Center
& College of Agriculture
Distance Education**

The Brenton Center plays a vital role in the College of Agriculture’s Distance Education Program. Our mission is to extend faculty expertise beyond the physical limits of the campus and to provide equal access to courses, certificates, and degree programs through quality distance education courses that provide for lifelong learning.

The College of Agriculture strives to meet the needs of all students. Distance education enhances this capability by utilizing the ever-expanding set of technological tools to reach students who may be unable to participate in the traditional University environment. With these technology tools, students from all walks of life participate in a University environment while continuing with their employment

schedules and family responsibilities. Distance education provides an outstanding level of education to everyone, not just to select individuals at strictly delineated times of the day.

Our primary objective is to provide high-quality educational experiences for students in order to develop independent and self-reliant learners. The use of technology allows the students to experience a greater amount of variety of primary learning materials and to have students connect with more resources and people.

Distance education puts the student in the center of the learning experience and gives students greater control over the rate of learning, the time of learning, the place of learning, and access to supplemental materials. Moreover, distance education technologies allow for a greater number of people to pursue a degree or certificate.

Online Learning Trends

A national study by Alfred P. Sloan Foundation based on responses from over 700 southern colleges and universities found institutions of higher education reporting a record 35 percent increase in online enrollment during fall 2005. All indicated that they expect their online enrollments to continue to grow. The increase was primarily undergraduates taking one or more classes during the survey period.

The study identified the following barriers:

- 1) students need more discipline to succeed in online courses;
- 2) greater faculty time and effort required to teach online; and
- 3) online education costs more to develop and deliver.

Source: Making the Grade: Online Education in the United States, 2006 Southern Edition. http://www.sloan-c.org/publications/survey/pdf/Making_the_Grade_Southern.pdf

Is Distance Education Effective?

Distance education programs are effective if they begin with careful planning. Student needs and course requirements need to be understood. Most distance classes taught by College of Agriculture faculty have some sort of WebCT component. This usually includes the class syllabus, assignment list, chat room, discussion boards, and required reading materials. The lecture portion of the class has traditionally been delivered on a video CD-ROM or streamed from a streaming server on the Web.

Today, more instructors are incorporating audio and video clips within their WebCT courses. In these courses, the students listen to short audio sound bytes or watch a video delay of a previously taught class on

their computer and follow the lectures and assignments at the same time, all via the Web. This requires students to have a powerful and fast enough computer and Internet connection to allow them to keep up with discussions and assignments.

Research has shown that distance education can be as effective as on-campus classes when the method and technologies used are appropriate; there is student-to-student interaction; and there is timely teacher-to-student feedback. (Moore & Thompson, 1990)

Distance education does not happen spontaneously; it evolves through hard work and dedicated efforts of many individuals.

“On-line learning expands access and opportunity with its ability to occur anytime and anywhere.”

Who Teaches That Course?



Student worker, Lindsay Nasers, is a freshman from Bigelow, MN majoring in Computer Engineering. Her responsibilities include web page design, WebCT course design, and audio clip edits.

One of her current tasks is constructing a web site about COA Distant Education Instructors. The purpose of this web site is to provide students more information about COA Distance Education and encourage students to take additional distance education courses.

The web site contains links to instructor pages, video clips, and student comments. The instructor link contains a photo, general information about the instructor, an audio clip about their course, and course syllabus. Each semester the Brenton Center conducts electronic course evaluations. The student comment link contains comments from students about COA courses and Distance Education programs and procedures.

The video clips link will contain short videos about COA Distance Education. The current video clip is about a high school student talking about her experience taking a distance education course (Agron 114).

Student Comments

“His (instructor’s) ability to structure the course so that everyone stayed up to date was great. It was not a course you could just sign on once a month and do all the work, you had to keep constant check on the site to know what was going on. It created structure like a classroom, but on the Internet.

He (instructor) knew how to engage a class from a distance. The assignments were clear and effective. I would take another (class) from him anytime.

This has been one of the most valuable courses in my entire college career because it was practical, not based in a high-stress environment, and the pace was well-suited to the topic.

I had a great experience, the extra materials provided made up for what I may have gotten from meeting face-to-face.

Student feedback was prompt and thorough.

Very interesting and informative.”

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