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ABSTRACT
          Community college students are often described as less
motivated, or "turned-off," compared to other college students. This
stereotype has prevented many writing instructors from trying new ways of
reaching these students at a Midwest community college, the majority of whom
have access to the Internet either at home or in the local library. Using an
instructor's home page to assist students' writing has become increasingly
important to the students. Two projects have been conducted in the author's
writing classes by using the Instructor's Home Page, one on The Three Gorges
Dam in China and one on sample essay evaluation. Projects like this, which
have been incorporated into China-Year celebrations, greatly stimulate the
students' interests in other cultures. A checklist for building a
student-friendly home page is also attached. (Author/RS)

Conference on College Composition and Communication, March 14-17, 2001, Denver, Colorado

E.23.   Home away from Home: Creating and Evaluation Instructional Web Sites

Presenter: Will Zhang, Des Moines Area Community College (http://www.dmacc.org/instructors/wwzhang

Topic: Making a "Web" for Students: From the Classroom to Their Homes and to the Instructor's Home Page.

Abstract: Community college students are often described as less motivated, or "turned-off" ones. The stereotype of these college students has prevented many writing instructors from trying new ways of reaching these students who desperately need help. Based on a survey among students at a Mid-west community college, the majority of them have access to the Internet either at home or in the local library. Using instructors' Home Page to assist students' writing has become increasingly important to the students. Two Projects have been conducted in my writing classes by using the Instructor's Home Page, one on Three Gorges Dam in China, and one on sample essay evaluation. Projects like this which has been incorporated into China-Year celebrations, greatly stimulate the students' interests in other cultures. A checklist for building a student-friendly Home page is also attached.

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Making a "Web" for Students: From the Classroom to
Their Homes and to the Instructor's Home Page

1. Community College Students and the World Wide Web: A
Survey

Community college students are often described as less
motivated, or "turned-off" ones by local communities. The
stereotype of these college students has prevented many
writing instructors from trying new ways to reach these
students who desperately need help. However, in the late
90s, two changes among community college students are very
noticeable that they are getting busier and busier and that
more of them surf on the Internet regularly.

According to a survey on 95 students at a community college
in the Mid-west, 89% have one or two jobs, working 20-45
hours a week. Classrooms are often their only time for
study. Frequently, they try to complete the assignments the
night before due dates. Therefore, it is hard for them to
get any professional help at this time. On the other hand,
62% have access to the Internet either at home or in the
local library.

Using instructors' Home page to assist students' writing
has become increasingly important to the students. But
there are two major problems with the instructors' Home
pages. First, the Home pages are developed and maintained
by computer professionals who usually update the Home pages
once a semester. Some have even been left not updated for
years. Actually, they are not functioning ones. Second,
though functioning, they lack major functions such as the
most needed assistance. More commonly used technology in
English classes includes distant learning and web-assisted
classes such as Daedalus. However, a very useful way of
using technology has not been widely discussed, which is
using instructors' home pages to compensate for the limited
classroom teaching.

2. Making the Instructor's Home Page an Educational Site:
Two Projects

The students in my writing classes have worked on two
projects with the help of the Instructor's Home Page. One
is on Three Gorges Dam in China for Composition II, and the
other one on sample essays evaluation for Basic Writing and
Introduction to Writing Skills.

As the college focuses on China as a country for cultural awareness in the academic year 2000-2001, the first project aims to let the students work on a specific project of Three Gorges Dam in China while arguing about environmentalism in a broader sense. My Home page reserved a special space for the background information on the Three Gorges Dam. On the Home page, my students can see pictures of the Dam, read relevant articles on the history and current situation of the Dam, and download articles concerning about major arguments on the Dam. The students are able to argue their points in their Web-assisted class. At the same time, some good, relevant sites and good academic search engines are also introduced to the students. Projects like this, which has been incorporated into China-Year celebrations, greatly stimulate the students' interests in other cultures. Without an instructor's Home page, this project would have been difficult, if not possible, to implement.

Many sample essays posted on my Home page are written by native speakers of English as well as well ESL students. However, all the students can benefit from each other's writings. Both my students in ESL classes and those in my mainstream writing classes need to evaluate each other's essays. ESL students can learn the authentic way (world choice and grammar, for example) to express ideas from the sample essays written by native speakers. Students in my mainstream classes can learn grammar and different cultures by proofreading essays written by ESL students.

All students would receive worksheets before they started. They may choose whichever essay they like to read. Though the posted essays written by native speakers are limited, hundreds of essays written by ESL students are posted on the Web. They were required to read minimum 1,500 words, and submitted the worksheets to me for credits.

The findings show that the ESL students can learn vocabulary and the American culture from the essays written by native speakers, while the American students can learn other cultures from the ESL students. They can also learn to fix mechanics by proofreading and editing the essays written by ESL students. This has been proven to be a very effective way of polishing their own grammar and their own writing.

A Checklist of an Instructor's Student-Friendly Home Page

1. The front page layout
    (A students-friendly layout needs to be clear, concise, and provides students' the most important information)

- ✓ Bulletin board(s)
- ✓ A menu
- ✓ Instructor's email address and major phone numbers (including toll free number)
- ✓ Instructors' photo (preferably at the top)
- ✓ The college logo and link
- ✓ Dates created and updated

2. The menu

- ✓ The college
- ✓ The instructor
- ✓ Syllabi
- ✓ Handouts & assignments
- ✓ Sample essays
- ✓ Writing resources
- ✓ Cool links
- ✓ Campus shots

3. About the instructor

- ✓ Office, office hours, office phone number, fax number (**Could also in the syllabus)
- ✓ Instructor's educational background (**preferably not on the front page)
- ✓ Instructor's research
- ✓ Samples of students' comments (**be more objective)

4. Handouts and assignments

- ✓ Major class handouts
- ✓ All essay assignments
- ✓ Some worksheets (**excluding peer response sheets)

5. Sample essays

- ✓ Essays in different writing classes (*different categories)
- ✓ Instructor's comments
- ✓ Instructor's announcement on posting students' essays

6. About the writing resources

- ✓ Major academic search engines
- ✓ Major academic links
- ✓ Major documentation styles (APA/MLA)

7. Cool links

- ✓ Assignment-related info links
- ✓ Other instructors' home pages
- ✓ College links on international/cultural week/year events

8. Campus shots

- ✓ Class activities (writing workshop, class debate, group work, etc.)
- ✓ Student activities (buying books, learning center, commencement. etc.)
- ✓ College cultural events
- ✓ Campus scenery

Do's and Don'ts on an Instructor's Home Page

- ❑ Do learn to maintain your home page by yourself.
- ❑ Do update it at least once a week (keep the home page alive).
- ❑ Do have the date of home page last updated.
- ❑ Do have a menu appear at the top part of the front page.
- ❑ Do make the home page academic.
- ❑ Do highlight the menu.
- ❑ Do have all front-page items in proportion (photo, phone number, menu, etc.).
- ❑ Don't post family photos on the front page.

- ➢ Don't post the description of the instructor's background on the front page.
- ➢ Don't make the home page too fancy (cartoons are preferred on some occasions).
- ➢ Don't highlight items other than classroom teaching.
- ➢ Don't lay out everything without a menu.
- ➢ Don't have an unprofessional instructor's photo.
- ➢ Don't make the background color either too dull or too busy.

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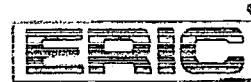
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