



UWG
ONLINE



October
2011

take a look

Associate Dean's Corner	1
I Am West Georgia	3
Meet the Staff	5
Online Around Campus	6
Online Teaching Tools	6
Online News & Notes	7
Professional Development	7
UWGONLINE Happenings	8
Online Faculty Kudos	8
Online Faculty Spotlight	9
Submissions	10

• **UWG** ONLINE *Thinking Outside the Box* •



Associate Dean's Corner

with Dr. Jason Huett

Where does the time go? I cannot believe we are already coming up to midterm. Most days it feels like I spend half the day putting out fires and the other half starting new ones. As Vonnegut would say, "so it goes..."

I was having a conversation the other day with a good friend who is retiring after working in higher education for almost 30 years. She was lamenting how much things had changed, reminiscing about the "good ole days," and she stated something to the effect that higher education had changed so much that she could no longer recommend it as a career to others. "No stability" she said.

I think she is right on that point. Education is by no means "stable." The world of education is in such flux right now, and we are, without a doubt, in a period of dynamic and unprecedented change. I can certainly see why one might lament the current state of affairs, or, at the very least, find it unsettling. Always the optimist, I countered to my friend that I felt this was also one of the most exciting times for education in human history and that I was glad to be a part of it. "You online education folks *would* think that" she retorted with a smile.

I know that many faculty are reluctant to embrace online learning, and I can understand why. For many years, online education has, at best, been regarded by some as a stepchild to the dominant classroom model, or, at

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Associate Dean's Corner

Continued

worst, as an oxymoron conjuring an unsavory image of questionable diploma mills. However, I honestly believe that technology has advanced to the point where quality online learning is both possible and in dramatically increasing demand by students. Still, I can honestly tell you that no distance educator worth their salt would advocate for online learning as a panacea for the myriad of issues facing higher education today. But, it has its place.

I work in distance education for a living, and I am the first to admit that in some cases online learning can cause more problems than it solves, and it is certainly *not* the right delivery medium for many programs. Where it can be a good fit, we need to move carefully and judiciously forward and only undertake online learning in targeted areas where it makes sense for us and aligns with our institution's culture, mission, and values. In other words, we can be the "right fit" for traditional face-to-face students and, in many cases, for distant students as well. For me, being a *Destination University* is less about geography and more about choice. I want to see us be the first choice for the broadest possible audience. This balanced approach is how you bring stability to the new educational landscape.

While working on this month's newsletter, it also occurred to me that we were missing something: *a student voice*. There is a fast growing audience out there that does not fit the mold of the traditional student. These are the moms and dads, single parents, soldiers, public servants, disabled individuals, working professionals, and others, struggling to balance responsibilities at work and at home, and they have a voice we all need to hear. Like most of us, they just want the chance to change their lives—and lives of the people that they love—for the better. To do that, they need an education. Just ask David Robertson, a legally blind, 52 year-old, resident of Tennessee getting his graduate degree *online* with us. His story starts on page three in the new section titled "I Am West Georgia."

Until next month, take care and have a safe and happy Halloween!

Cheers,

Jason



I Am West Georgia

Featuring David S. Robertson



For the last 32 years, I have lived in Murfreesboro, Tennessee. In 1984, I earned an undergraduate degree at Middle Tennessee State University, then took 25 years off to get married, raise a family, and work. In 2009, I returned to MTSU as a non-traditional student to earn my Master's degree in Educational Leadership. Unfortunately, my educational comeback also included a serious visual impairment that left me with only a 10-degree field of vision. So what's a legally blind, aging Tennessean (52 next birthday) doing in a UWG newsletter? Well, I believe I am a success story in the making, and UWG ONLINE is my tool of choice for building a brighter future.

It may seem odd for a Tennessee resident to attend the University of West Georgia, but the combination of at least four factors makes it absolutely ideal for me:

Distance education works. Online education is empowering to me. "At my place, at my pace" is *the* winning strategy for a disabled student who works two part-time jobs to make ends meet. I have chipped away at coursework at my home office, work PCs on lunch breaks, on my iPad at Panera Bread, even having attended a synchronous Wimba session in the garage at my church. UWG ONLINE makes my education possible.

UWG had the degree I needed. I am currently pursuing an Ed.S. in Media and Instructional Technology. To find this specialized degree delivered in an online program was the greatest discovery of my academic career. This degree will qualify me to work in any public or private K-12 school or in higher education as a media and instructional technology specialist. This degree has the potential to propel me into an exciting new world of opportunities in the fields of education and technology. I am so thankful that this regional university thinks globally when it comes to education.

Adaptive technology – Studies show that disabled students are a growing minority in society and on university campuses. Adaptive technology helps level the playing field and enables students like me to use assistive technology to attend classes remotely and work to improve my quality of life and level of indepen-



I Am West Georgia

Continued

dence. The DDEC (now UWG ONLINE) and ITS have been wonderful to work with to ensure that my hardware and software work with CourseDen, [Wimba](#), Pronto ([Blackboard IM](#)), and other UWG systems. For me, one call has done it all to keep me online and productive.

Engaged UWG faculty and staff – It has been a pleasant experience to discover that UWG offers a culture of caring faculty and staff that is, in my experience, uncommon in higher education. My time here has been marked by people like Kim Huett, who drove my wife and I around campus to get me registered and completely oriented in my initial enrollment visit. Professors like Dr. Marty Bray, Dr. Leslie Moller, and Dr. Jason Huett have each patiently worked with me to overcome every obstacle and helped me perform well academically. Others like Doug Jenkins in the Vocational Rehabilitation Office, Wanda Walker at the UWG Bookstore, and June Barry at the COE Office have each played an important role in making distance education a positive experience for me.

These and other factors have converged to present me with an extraordinary academic experience and value. My technical skill set has skyrocketed since enrollment. I went from the “what’s a wiki?” stage to now authoring a family of wikis that have redefined the way we do business in one organization I serve. Even though I’m only at the midpoint of my degree, my “technology toolbox” is already overflowing with new tools like [Office 2010](#), [WinSCP](#), [Nvu](#), blogs, [Camtasia Studio](#), [Jing](#), and dozens of other real-world Web 2.0 tools, web sites, and resources provided by my fellow classmates and professors to edge me closer to being an authentic specialist in media and instructional technology.

UWG ONLINE is making me confident and competent to enter a competitive job market and become a serious contender for a high quality career after graduation. I am profoundly thankful to UWG for delivering online programs to people like me.

I am West Georgia, and I am an online student.

-David S. Robertson (Class of 2012)



Meet the Staff



Rhea Wojcik

DDEC Graduate Assistant

I have been a UWG student and worked within various contexts at the university since 2003. I received a B.F.A in 2007 and will have completed a Master's of Education in Professional Counseling this December. I took two years off in-between degrees to marry, travel and realize a passion for learning.

I have worked with UWG ONLINE since December, 2009; and before, as a Graduate Research Assistant for the department of Collaborative Support and Intervention. I greatly appreciated (and still do!) my transition over to Distance Ed. as a Graduate Assistant, as I have been able to employ skills I obtained during my undergraduate degree: graphic design and a general creative outlook. I've also had the chance to put together several videos for UWG ONLINE and in the process been exposed to and begun to utilize some really great software applications, such as [Motion](#) and [iMovie](#), as well as [Camtasia](#) and [Captivate](#). Currently, I facilitate instructional design processes, provide faculty and student technical support, as well as serve as a consultant and resource to those who utilize CourseDen and other instructional web-based tools, such as [Wimba Classroom](#), [Google](#), [Skype](#), [Moodle](#), and [Blackboard IM](#). My responsibilities have also included building resources for online faculty and students by researching and compiling information on various [Wikis](#). My exposure to and training in the soft and more technical-sides of Distance Education has been diverse, fast-paced, challenging and lots of fun! I often piece together visual graphics for faculty and staff, as well as get to play 'videographer' at times, as faculty work hard to bring creative elements and complexities to their online courses.

One of my favorite resources is [Google Scholar](#). As a graduate student, the ease and accessibility of Google Scholar is supreme in its ability to support efficient research. I also constantly utilize [Adobe Photoshop](#). I am always discovering new features and methods of creating and editing graphic images; I find that heightened aesthetic quality helps to capture attention and promote interest within education.

My professional interests lie within the pedagogical and the therapeutic: instructional design, experiential processing, art and narrative intervention methodologies, and creative problem-solving. I love painting and general mess-making, being exposed to idiosyncrasies and the dynamic of dichotomies. I become overwhelmingly excited at the prospect of beginning to practice counseling in a professional context: to listen to others and lend support, to facilitate development and growth. I adore spending time with my husband, daughter and our extended family.



Online Around Campus

The School of Nursing

The mission of the School of Nursing is to exemplify academic excellence in a caring environment by providing quality undergraduate and graduate education to meet current and evolving health care needs within the global community. Utilization of online instructional strategies is fundamental to educating nurses for 21st century practice. The school uses CourseDen in all its undergraduate and graduate courses. In addition, the RN-BSN program is offered online (51-94%) and prepares nurses for professional advancement and graduate education. The MSN program is fully online (95-100%) and prepares nurse educators, nurse managers, and Clinical Nurse Leaders. The School of Nursing works diligently to serve students and facilitate their attainment of learning outcomes through the implementation of contemporary online instructional design methods and processes and has initiated the use of Google Applications to facilitate collaboration among faculty, students and the professional community. A proposal for a fully online EdD in Nursing Education program has been submitted to the USG Board of Regents and is currently under review.

-Kathryn Grams PhD, RN
Professor of Nursing; Dean

[Department Website](#)

Online Teaching Tools

The HTML Editor (Tough stuff made easy!)

An easy-to-use advanced web authoring tool: try the free trial and experience quick and organized ways to design towards student interests and accessibility; inundate your web-space with information. This software is user-friendly for both the creator and the viewer.

Applian FLV Player (Support multimedia!)

Looking for an easy way to play Flash Video (FLV) files downloaded from YouTube and other media resources? This free software is easy to use and sports a small download size (2.12 MB!) and various features. The FLV Player allows the user to drag-and-drop multiple files at once as well as maintain previous audio and visual positions at re-launch.

Paint.NET (Add some personality to your online teaching!)

Utilize this easy-to-use basic graphic design software, for free. Paint.NET is an image and photo editing software for computers that run Windows. It features an intuitive and innovative user interface with support for layers, unlimited undo, special effects, and a wide variety of useful and powerful tools. An active and growing [online community](#) provides friendly help and [tutorials](#).



Online News & Notes

Online Learning Factoid of the Month:

A recent systematic meta-analysis of the research literature from 1996 through 2008 by the U.S. Department of Education that found for the first time that "...on average, students in online learning conditions performed better than those receiving face-to-face instruction" (Means, Toyama, Murphy, Bakia, & Jones, 2009, p.ix).

If you only Try One Thing this month, try this:

Check out [Doodle](#) for free and easy online scheduling. Doodle eliminates the chaos of scheduling and saves you a lot of time and energy while attempting to bring a number of people together. Doodle enables you to propose several dates and times, while participants indicate their availability online. Advanced functions allow you to connect online calendars, utilize Doodle from your mobile phone, as well as make personal customizations according to your specific schedule and needs.

If you are Adventurous check out:

[Wikispaces](#): an easy-to-use web-space that allows you to share, post, and publish, embed various media, as well as control external access. UWG students and faculty have free access to Wikispaces and can create endless online spaces that house various instructional elements or serve as collaborative, working areas, etc. See how to [get started](#) as a UWG faculty member and/or student.

Professional Development

Making Technology Manageable to Drive Results

Tuesday, October 18, 2:00-3:00 p.m.

Education technology should make it easier to get the results you need with the resources you have. If you're finding that your educational software programs are demanding more from you than they're delivering, join this free webinar to learn how making instructional technology more manageable. Hear from large-scale educational software users who aren't just surviving, but thriving with their implementation. [Register here.](#)

Challenge Based Learning in Action

Wednesday, October 19, 1:00-2:30 p.m.

Challenge Based Learning allows students to connect more deeply with content by addressing real-world issues. In this webcast, *Apple's* panel of experts will report on a five-month global *Challenge Based Learning* project at K12 and HiEd institutions and will demonstrate resources and possibilities for schools interested in implementing this groundbreaking framework. [Register here.](#)

SoftChalk Connect & SoftChalk Library: A Short Course

Monday, October 24, 4:00-5:00 p.m.

Learn how to utilize SoftChalk's *Library* function. You will be shown how to incorporate resources into the library and thus your virtual lesson plan. You will also be introduced to SoftChalk *Connect* and shown how to get started, as well as useful ways in which SoftChalk *Connect* may be utilized to facilitate curriculum, as well as how to use both applications together, in order to achieve diverse effects. [Register here.](#)



UWG ONLINE: Happenings, etc.

Training, Workshops, & Events:

Did You Know...Shift Happens!

Explore ways to increase your instructional effectiveness using CourseDen and other Web 2.0 Tools.

10/12; 10/21; & 10/26 @ 10-12 pm

For more information & to sign up:

Contact Debra Robinson
@ uwg.debra.robinson@gmail.com

Go Live with Wimba

Take your online class components to another level. Learn how to conduct synchronous meetings with tools available in CourseDen.

10/20/11 @ 10-12 pm

For more information & to sign up:

Contact Matias Marabotto
@ matiasmarabotto@gmail.com

CourseDen Gradebook

Explore the functions of Gradebook in CourseDen.

This class will look at import and export tools to help you create an effective feedback system for your students.

10/19/11 @ 10-12 pm

For more information & to sign up:

Contact Matias Marabotto
@ matiasmarabotto@gmail.com

For an extensive day-by-day account of upcoming available

Training Sessions & Workshops offered by UWG ONLINE [click here](#) and select UWG ONLINE from the category list.

Online Faculty Kudos

We would like to commend the following faculty on their efforts and achievements!

Christy Talley Smith & Tanacha Gaines: eCore

First Place recipients of the *2nd Annual USG Wimba Users' Group Innovator Award* for "Successful Course Revisions with Wimba Classroom". Congratulations to you both! Watch archived presentations [here](#).

Lara Willox, PhD: Associate Professor of Early Learning & Childhood Education

Second Place recipient of the *2nd Annual USG Wimba Users' Group Innovator Award* for "Engaging Students in an Online Early Education Course". Congratulations Dr. Willox! Watch archived presentations [here](#).

Rosalind Duplechain, PhD: Associate Professor of Early Learning & Childhood Education

Dr. Duplechain has utilized various online instructional tools, such as [Skype](#) and [Blackboard IM](#), to effectively teach and provide consultative support to, and interaction between, her students. Following an assessment of what worked (and what did not), Dr. Duplechain currently meets student needs via [Wimba Classroom](#): students who prefer not to attend class face-to-face (whenever the option is there) follow along via streaming audio and video provided by Wimba Classroom.

Elizabeth Butts: Lecturer; Karen Clevenger, Ed.D: Instructor; Cindy Moore: Adjunct Professor; Kristen Mosier: Adjunct Professor of Leadership & Applied Instruction

This innovative group of professors continue a second semester of collaborative efforts to offer students increasing resources and ease of access to course material through the use of Wikis and [Podcasts](#). Specifically, the education majors are asked to set up personal [Wikispaces](#), taking the place of the traditional hard-copy notebook. Consequently, students create accessible, contemporary electronic portfolios containing resources, original teaching units, and instructional videos as they begin their careers.

*Online Faculty Spotlight*

Lara Willox, PhD
*Assistant Professor, Early Learning
& Childhood Education*

I am an Assistant Professor in the Early Learning and Childhood Education department in the College of Education. This is my second year at UWG. I am a recent graduate of the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill. In 2006 I started teaching in online classrooms at Carolina. I began by developing and teaching mentoring courses for the Carolina Online Lateral Entry program. My interest grew and during my first semester at UWG I became involved in the online transition of the School Improvement doctoral program. Since then I have been actively involved designing courses, mentoring faculty, and teaching. My goal for online education is to challenge students while creating a comfortable environment for them to engage with me, the content, and each other.

During the summer I taught EDUC 2110, a required course for all Education majors. For most students, this was their first online class. While the content of the course is of the utmost importance, students who have difficulty navigating the course and/or misunderstanding the context for the content will become confused. To facilitate my goal of comfort, while challenged and engaged, I organized the course carefully making sure it was easy to navigate and user friendly. I begin each module with a video introduction, a written overview, and a checklist. (I typically film all the course module introductions in one day, bringing seven different shirts to wear so it isn't too obvious!) In addition to a user-friendly page, I also think communication is an important element of an online course. This summer I required all of my EDUC 2110 to check in with me weekly using [Blackboard IM](#). This proved invaluable; as a result, students were consistently contacting me during my online office hours.

I like things to be as efficient as possible and I've learned how to structure my classes so that information is disseminated smoothly. While I use CourseDen for the shell of the course I create most materials in Google docs and link this to the CourseDen page. The changes I make on [Google Docs](#) automatically update in CourseDen. I also use Google forms to solicit anonymous feedback during the course, and I have used the Google spreadsheet for simultaneously data collection for a class assignment. I've found this to be a great resource for my classes. Beyond the Google tools I also use Dropbox, which has virtually eliminated my need to carry a flash drive and allows me to access all of my materials everywhere.

I have discovered most of these tools during my one year of on the job training here through faculty development offerings. [Itunes U](#) was particularly impacting because it provided me a mentor and specific training on online tools. I am looking forward to continuing my quest for technology understanding by creating [podcasts](#), eBooks, and contributing to the UWG iTunes U site. I feel fortunate to have the resources available as we transition to more online programming.

When I am not teaching online my Google calendar reminds me to watch the football game, play tennis, or go grocery shopping. I live in Temple, GA with my partner, 12 year old son, two dogs, and cat.



Questions & Submissions

For questions, suggestions, or items to include in the next newsletter such as:

- *Upcoming Events, Workshops, & Trainings**
- *Publications & Other Achievements**
- *Online Teaching/Learning News & Insights**

Please contact Rhea Wojcik:

rheazerr@gmail.com

We look forward to learning about and sharing your experiences and achievements.

Thank you for your contributions!

UWG ONLINE CHALLENGE

The first three people to email the correct answers to the following questions will win something cool!

- 1. Please list the software application that allows Dr. Willox to solicit anonymous feedback during a course.**
- 2. Please list the four factors that make UWG the best option for student David S. Robertson.**
- 3. Please name the software that Dr. Duplechain uses in order to provide her students with the option of attending regular face-to-face meetings, at a distance.**
- 4. Please list the online resource that proves very helpful for graduate students conducting research.**

Please email rheazerr@gmail.com, list your full name, contact information and your department. All questions must be answered correctly and previous winners are ineligible (we are trying to spread the love around.) Items awarded are for faculty use and will be transferred to department inventory.

Thank you!

