

VCL in the Community Colleges: Strategies for Maximizing Effective Use

Tara S. Behrend, Eric N. Wiebe, and David A. Sharek
<tara.behrend@gmail.com, eric_wiebe@ncsu.edu, dsharek@shardex.com>

The Friday Institute for Educational Innovation, NC State University

Abstract

This presentation will focus on work carried out over the past year by researchers at the Friday Institute in conjunction with the VCL Project Team at NC State University, Wake Technical Community College and the North Carolina Community Colleges System.

This initiative, funded by the North Carolina Community Colleges System, was created in order to investigate how the Virtual Computing Lab (VCL) can best address the needs of students in the community college system. This work was also supported by an IBM faculty development grant to the second author.

A pilot study and evaluation was conducted at Wake Tech Community College to evaluate several aspects of VCL implementation. Specifically, we examined student perceptions of the system's reliability, barriers to use, and access to required technological resources. Additionally, we measured teacher and administrator experiences with the system configuration and operation, and identified potential barriers to successful large-scale implementation. The pilot study was conducted with fifteen sections of an introductory computer technology course, and approximately 250 students participated in the baseline survey.

Together, this information will lead to recommendations as to how to best support a productive and efficient user experience for students and instructors in a community college setting. Evaluation is ongoing and will continue in a wider sample of colleges next year. Future work includes expansion of the project to piloting and evaluation in NC K-12 schools.

Behrend, T., Wiebe, E. N., & Sharek, D. (May, 2008). *VCL in the community colleges: Strategies for maximizing effective usage*. Presented at the International Conference on the Virtual Computing Initiative. Research Triangle Park, NC.