CSUS Has State’s First Distance PR Program

CSUS will become the first university in the state to offer a public relations program by Internet and cable television.

Beginning in fall 1999, students who have completed lower division work and met other University requirements will be able to complete distance courses for a major in communications studies with an emphasis in public relations in as few as three semesters.

The move will make one of the state’s most innovative communication studies programs available to anyone, anywhere who is qualified to enroll. It’s the latest in a series of distance learning initiatives by the University.

“This is an exciting move for us. It’s going to allow us to reach students who couldn’t attend otherwise,” said Marlene von Friederichs-Fitzwater, chair of the CSUS communication studies department.

von Friederichs-Fitzwater was one of the University’s first professors to offer a course entirely by the Internet, and now teaches two such courses – advanced public relations and health communication.

“What has truly surprised me, and what has been very gratifying, is that I find these courses actually increase my interaction with students,” von Friederichs-Fitzwater says. “Through email and phone contact, I feel like I get to know students better than in a traditional classroom.”

The new program is set to begin just two years after the University offered its first course completely over the Internet. That geology course, first taught by Susan Slaymaker in fall 1997, has proven highly popular and is now one of 10 Internet courses offered at CSUS this spring. In addition, three courses this spring are a mix of Internet and cable, and four are a mix of Internet and the traditional classroom.

To enroll in the distance program, students must first complete lower division work at CSUS or a community college. They also must have access to the Internet and cable television, though plans call for eventually offering the program entirely by Internet so that even more students may be served.

Students enrolled in traditional courses will be able to enroll in the distance courses as well. Among them is Virginia Kidd, who is teaching a course on creative problem solving with a mix of Saturday meetings and Internet work.

Like many faculty, Kidd has mixed feelings about the distance format. She says she likes the convenience it affords students but misses the face to face contact.

Classes Offer Practical Politics, Economics

Among more than a dozen new CSUS projects that tie class room learning to community service are three which focus on politics and economics.

In communication studies, Larry Chase is developing a course that focuses on how social problems become issues, and how to “fight city hall.” Public policy professor Rob Wassmer’s students are working individually with government agencies and nonprofit groups. And Bob Waste, director of the public policy program, is working on a new course that explores issues in the Sacramento Region.

All these projects tie service to coursework, a growing trend in higher education. Students in service learning courses work in the community, and then reflect upon and discuss the experience in class.

Many professors at CSUS have included such service over the years. But service learning was given a boost this year when the University set aside $20,000 in lottery funds for Office of Community Collaboration mini-grants to professors who want to include it.

The Office of Community Collaboration also provides ongoing support by helping find placement sites, encouraging students and conducting evaluations.

“This course will help students communicate their concerns more effectively,” says Chase of his new approach to the communication studies department’s “Self and Society” course.

Chase will teach the course this fall. His students will explore strategies for getting local governments to address issues. They also will examine the social responsibility of citizens, problem solving and theories of attitude change.

At the end of the semester, the students will select one major issue facing the Sacramento area and present a forum on it.

Management Efforts Build Business Ties

Two new efforts within the department of management are helping faculty build relationships with the business community.

The first is a Research Fellow Program, in which the private sector provides support for a faculty member to conduct research in the area of her or his choice. The second is a Working Paper Series that allows faculty to share their research.

“We’ve been really focused on strengthening our ties to the business community and to the Capital Region in general,” says Laurence Takeschi, chair of the management department.

“Both of these initiatives are an important part of that effort.”

He says the new initiatives promote faculty research and develop relationships with the business community.

The Working Paper Series begins this semester. It will spotlight ongoing faculty research on the theory, practice and teaching of business, and allow faculty to receive input from practitioners and others conducting research or teaching in the same area.

California Capital, SBDC of Sacramento will be the first community-based sponsor.

The department’s Research Fellow Program began last semester. Dale Fletcher, a management professor at CSUS since 1975, is the first Research Fellow. He’s being sponsored for one course of release time during the 1998-99 school year by the Law Offices of Wilcoxen, Montgomery & Harbison.

“What is nice is that this program both recognizes faculty for their past research and gives them the resources to allow them to do more research,” Fletcher says.
Nancy Lapp planned to be a teacher or a diplomat. Either way, she was sure she wanted to travel. The new CSUS professor of government (she decided to teach) has certainly succeeded in seeing the world.

Lapp spent one year as an undergraduate intern and then half a year traveling through Europe after graduation. Later, she taught English in Japan and briefly visited South Korea. An expert on Latin America, she has made numerous trips to Mexico and was recently in Brazil for more than three months conducting field work for her doctoral dissertation.

Now Lapp is sharing what she has learned of the world with CSUS students, teaching international relations.

Last semester Lapp taught three courses: introduction to government, Latin American government and politics, and international politics. This semester she will teach research methodology as well.

“I always thought I wanted to work at a place where there is a nice balance between teaching and research,” says Lapp, adding that she plans to continue conducting field work overseas.

Lapp earned her bachelor’s degree in international relations and Spanish from CSUS. In addition to advanced Spanish reading and writing ability, she has some reading and speaking proficiency in Portuguese.

She earned her master’s degree and doctorate degree in political science from UCLA. Her dissertation, for which she conducted field work in Brazil, was on “Landing Votes: Expansion of Suffrage and Land Reform in Latin America.”

Lapp previously taught at Riverside Community College. She was an instructor at UCLA Extension and a teaching assistant at UCLA.

Lapp was born and raised in Redding. She is married and lives in Sacramento, and notes she’s relieved no longer to be facing the long commutes in Southern California.
latest research projects also are on the site. Bayard received his bachelor’s, master’s and doctoral degrees from the University of Massachusetts, Amherst and has a lengthy list of publications and presentations. It is quite appropriate that a computer science and engineering teacher utilize personal computers as a learning tool. However, Bayard says that all academic departments and professors can enhance their communication with the University community and their students by providing information sources other than books and lectures. “Our goal is to ensure that we reach our entire student body with the instruction they need,” Bayard says. “Wherever they are, on a schedule that works for them.” The overwhelming majority of CSUS students, about 97 percent, live off campus. Bayard’s use of study keys, definition guides, exercises, video and sound of his lectures present an additional value as a supplement for those enrolled in his classes on campus and as the core of instruction for those enrolled online. Teaching at the University for nine years, Bayard has tried to use a new teaching method each semester. About 30 percent of his ideas are accepted easily by his students and get positive feedback he says, adding, “a teacher can only provide the opportunities and tools but never has full control over how students make use of them.” In coming semesters, his hunt to improve student learning tools will continue. He also plans to continue giving presentations to local high school students to show them that his classes at CSUS, and many others, are not just lectures and books. Trying to talk with Bayard about anything but teaching is difficult. He quickly returns the conversation to his multimedia notes. His passion for changing the way college courses are taught is evident and with his office full of computers and video machines Bayard is prepared to create new teaching styles for the 21st century.

— Elizabeth DePalma
The Lenaea Festival at CSUS — an annual gathering of Northern California high school theatrical talent — has been honored by yet another major arts organization.

The California Alliance for Arts Education recognized the Festival recently at San Francisco’s Zeum, citing its “exceptional contribution to arts education in California.” The Festival was the only university-based program among the 12 programs honored with an Award of Excellence for its “exceptional contribution to arts education in California.” The Festival was the only university-based program among the 12 programs honored with an Award of Excellence for its “exceptional contribution to arts education in California.”

Now in its 45th year, the Lenaea Festival attracts more than 1,000 high school students from more than 70 schools. The students take part in three days of one-act plays, monologues and duets, with no fewer than nine presentations taking place at any one time. Respondents provide critiques and recognize the best efforts of the students.

This year’s Lenaea Festival will be held Feb. 5-7 at various CSUS venues. Some of this year’s highlights:

- Of the 55 one-act plays scheduled, seven are student-written.
- Guest critics of student-written plays will be made by Patrick Murphy, head of acting at the DePaul University Theatre School in Chicago and original script coordinator for the Chicago Goodman School of Theatre.
- Students from the DeWitt-Nelson School, a school for incarcerated boys, will participate for the first time by sending a video tape of their performance. Respondents will travel to the school to critique the performance.
- The CSUS Lenaea Festival, named for the theatre festival once held in ancient Greece, was established in 1955 by Carl Thomas, who was then the chair of the CSUS department of theatre arts. The early festival lasted a week and included students from about a dozen schools. It has grown into the only such large festival for high school students in Northern California.

More information is available by contacting Barbara Aimz, Festival administrator and coordinator, at 278-6702.