



Make a Movie ... And Be the Star!

The increasing availability of digital technology has led to new and exciting possibilities for teaching. One of the most functional and accessible forms of media is the screencast, “a digital recording of computer screen output, also known as a video screen capture, often containing audio narration” (“Screencast,” n.d.). Using this technology, instructors can create videos of themselves that include PowerPoint slides or images and sound. Screencasts promote student learning by

- offering supplementary materials that reinforce content included in other aspects of a course (e.g., assigned readings, classroom learning experiences, videos related to a lesson);
- assisting students in learning complex, multistep skills that require practice and repetition (e.g., steps in a lab experiment);
- maintaining course continuity when faculty are unable to conduct a scheduled class (e.g., while attending an off-campus conference);
- creating opportunities for new teaching strategies (e.g., assigning a screencast lecture as homework and having students discuss it at the next class); and
- providing a weekly preview of content, assignments, or events to connect with students outside the classroom.

With some simple equipment and a short list of steps, instructors can create screencasts to enhance the teaching/learning environment.

Acquiring the Equipment

Moving into the wonderful world of screencasting requires some basic tools:

- Internal cameras and microphones that come with most computers or tablets usually will work fine, but instructors who plan to create screencasts regularly may want to invest in an inexpensive external microphone (i.e., often \$15 or less). However, if instructors want to share their faces and voices, they probably should buy an external camera, which usually is also very inexpensive, to attach to their computers.
- To create a video capture of the image on a computer screen, instructors will not need a camera but will need to connect with an online screencast provider. Many campuses have institutional subscriptions to a video capture/storage service. Instructors should check with the technology offices at their institutions to determine whether their campuses offer this service and, if so, how to access it. If the service is not available, a number of free websites allow users to create a five-minute announcement (with the option of subscribing to produce a series

“Pick up a camera. Shoot something. No matter how small, no matter how cheesy, no matter whether your friends and your sister star in it. Put your name on it as director. Now you’re a director.”

—James Cameron,
film director and
producer

of screencasts or longer productions). Free screencast websites include Screenr (<http://www.screenr.com/>) and Screencastomatic (<http://www.screencast-o-matic.com/>). Wikipedia ("Comparison of Screencasting Software," n.d.) has created an excellent comparison of various screencasting tools and their capabilities to help users select a service provider.

Creating Screencasts

Instructors can follow these six key steps to produce screencasts:

- 1. Create a plan and direction.** This first step is not necessarily creating a script but rather an agenda or content template to help instructors keep focused before stepping in front of the microphone or camera.
- 2. Examine the equipment.** Instructors should make sure the microphone and camera (if needed) are operational by checking the settings on the control panel of their computers.
- 3. Do a background check.** If using a camera, instructors need to be aware of the background that will be captured on video. A setting with minimal distractions is best.
- 4. Bring on lights, camera, action.** Before beginning production of a screencast, faculty members should remember this advice (which this author learned the hard way): You will not be perfect, so do not expect to be perfect. Although producing a high-quality screencast is the goal, instructors should not obsess on a mispronounced word or a missed PowerPoint slide. Little mistakes will happen, and most screencasts are disposable (i.e., created and used one time and then discarded). To create screencasts that will be used repeatedly, instructors might consider a more polished (and perhaps script-driven) production.
- 5. Share the screencast.** Instructors can send students an e-mail with a link to the final product or post it to the campus learning management system.
- 6. Evaluate the process.** After posting a screencast, instructors should critically and thoughtfully assess the product to determine what worked well and what might be improved next time, paying particular attention to students' comments, especially how frequently they mention the effort and how it contributes to the overall quality of the class and their learning.

Turning the Camera

To engage and introduce students to this 21st century technology, instructors can have them produce a screencast as an individual or small group assignment. Faculty can provide a topic or have students choose one related to course objectives. A rubric to help students assess their final product (e.g., some categories might include use of technology to present topic, visual and audio quality, professionalism) and links to online tutorials that explain how to use varied screencasting tools can jumpstart the creative process. To add excitement, instructors might schedule a screencast premiere during class for students to unveil their original work and learn from each other's research.

REFERENCES

Comparison of screencasting software. (n.d.). In *Wikipedia*. Retrieved June 13, 2014, from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Comparison_of_screencasting_software

Screencast. (n.d.). In *Wikipedia*. Retrieved June 13, 2014, from <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Screencast>

Casting more light on screencasts

These websites provide additional resources to help instructors get started with screencasting:

- *How to Create a Screencast* offers step-by-step directions with screen captures to guide instructors through the process (<http://www.wikihow.com/Create-a-Screencast>).
- *Screencasting to Engage Learning* includes strategies for incorporating screencasts in teaching (<http://www.educause.edu/ero/article/screencasting-engage-learning>).
- *Dan Nunez's Screencast Commandments* is a fun video with great advice on screencasting mechanics (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1tdvF5y_W4M).
- *The Transparent Teacher* lists several examples for using screencasts to assess students' work directly (<http://alytapp.com/2011/10/27/assessment-feedback-via-screencast-examples/>).

What's Happening at The National Resource Center

Conferences and Continuing Education

Conferences and Institutes

21st National Conference on Students in Transition

October 18-20, 2014

Denver, Colorado

College students experience many changes and transitions throughout their undergraduate years. As educators, we must provide support for the entire undergraduate experience—from the transition into college through graduation. The 21st National Conference on Students in Transition will focus on this wide range of experiences, including the first college year, the sophomore year, the senior year, and the transfer transition. Attendees will have opportunities to share with and learn from each other the latest trends, initiatives, best practices, ideas, research, and assessment strategies aimed at supporting student success in these and other transitions.

Please go to <http://sc.edu/fye/sit/> to register or for more information.

Institute on Peer Educators

November 7-9, 2014

University of South Carolina, Columbia

The National Resource Center for The First-Year-Experience and Students in Transition invites professionals involved in campus programs and initiatives who engage undergraduate students as peer educators to participate in the Institute on Peer Educators. The institute will provide participants with information and effective strategies and concepts that positively impact peer leadership experiences and enhance program outcomes. The registration deadline is October 6, 2014.

Please go to <http://sc.edu/fye/pe> to register or for more information.

Save the Dates

34th Annual Conference on The First-Year Experience

February 6-10, 2015

Dallas, Texas

22nd National Conference on Students in Transition

October 17-19, 2015

Baltimore, Maryland

Online Courses

The National Resource Center offers online courses on topics of interest in higher education. The courses provide participants the same content and opportunities for interaction with peers and the instructor as traditional (i.e., classroom-based) learning environments while taking advantage of pedagogy and teaching techniques that are not possible or common in those

Research Reports on College Transitions No. 4 2012-2013 National Survey of First-Year Seminars: Exploring High-Impact Practices in the First College Year

Dallin George Young and Jessica M. Hopp



For a quarter century, the National Resource Center for The First-Year Experience and Students in Transition has been examining the prevalence, structure, and administration of first-year seminars on American college campuses. The 2012-2013 administration of the National Survey of First-Year Seminars was expanded to explore the connection between the seminar and other high-impact practices in the first college year, including learning communities, service-learning, common reading programs, undergraduate research, and writing instruction. Findings are disaggregated by institutional characteristics and seminar type so that readers may easily identify the course features with the greatest relevance for their own context.

(2014). ISBN 978-1-889271-90-3. \$25.

www.nrcpubs.com

settings. The courses use tools such as e-mail, threaded discussions or forums, listservs, and blogs. Enrollment is limited to 40 participants. Participants will earn 1.5 continuing education units for each course. Visit <http://www.sc.edu/fye/oc> for more information.

Online Course Offerings

Proving and Improving: Foundations of First-Year Assessment

August 18-September 19, 2014

Facilitated by Dallin George Young, assistant director for Research, Grants, and Assessment, National Resource Center for The First-Year Experience and Students in Transition, University of South Carolina, Columbia

An introduction and overview, this course will provide participants with knowledge and tools needed to make sense of first-year assessment issues at their respective institutions. More specifically, the course will provide a survey of assessment models and methods; offer strategies for creating and implementing assessment plans, including the development of learning outcomes; and explore instruments used to assess learning, experiences, satisfaction, and development in students' transitions to college. Attention will be given to qualitative and quantitative methods. The registration deadline is August 14, 2014.

Common Readings: Creating Community Beyond the Book

October 20-November 14, 2014

Facilitated by Catherine F. Andersen, associate provost for Academic Affairs, University of Baltimore, and Fellow, John N. Gardner Institute on Excellence in Undergraduate Education

Common reading programs, defined for the purpose of this course, occur when groups of incoming first-year students read the same book(s) and participate in activities that create a shared intellectual experience. These programs are becoming an important component of first-year experience initiatives and are designed most frequently to introduce new students to the intellectual expectations of college in formal and informal gatherings. High-impact programs go beyond book discussion groups and include students, faculty, staff, and the larger community in an array of social, intellectual, and civic activities. Participants will discuss the benefits and goals of common reading programs; learn about the various types; and explore how they differ in scope, impact, and cost. They also will design a comprehensive plan for their own campuses that includes goals and outcomes, an assessment strategy, a budget, book selection criteria, and curricular and cocurricular programming. The registration deadline is October 15, 2014.

Publications of Interest



The First-Year Seminar: Designing, Implementing, and Assessing Courses to Support Student Learning and Success

This five-volume series is for educators who are interested in launching a first-year seminar or revamping an existing program. Each volume examines a different aspect of first-year seminar design or administration. Two of the volumes focus on using peers in the classroom and assessing the first-year seminar.

November 7-9, 2014
University of South Carolina,
Columbia, SC

INSTITUTE ON

PEER EDUCATORS



Register at:
WWW.SC.EDU/FYE/PE

Sign up for



Looking for new teaching strategies or fresh ideas for first-year seminars? *E-Source*, the National Resource Center's online newsletter for college transitions, offers a wealth of information. *E-Source* also is accepting submissions for the fall 2014 issue. To view the archives, review submission guidelines, and receive content alerts for new issues, please go to www.sc.edu/fye/esource

Vol. IV, Using Peers in the Classroom

Jennifer A. Latino and Michelle Ashcraft
(2012). ISBN 978-1-889271-79-8. 116 pages. \$25.00.

Vol. V, Assessing the First-Year Seminar

Daniel B. Friedman
(2012). ISBN 978-1-889271-81-3. 112 pages. \$25.00.

To order, please go to <http://www.nrcpubs.com/p/70/the-first-year-seminar-designing-implementing-and-assessing-courses-to-support-student-learning-and-success>



Common Reading Programs: Going Beyond the Book

Jodi Levine Laufgraben, author and editor

Sometimes controversial, common reading programs provide students an introduction to the intellectual expectations of college in an often-informal gathering of college faculty and peers. Yet, truly dynamic and successful programs move beyond book discussion groups to include students, faculty, staff, and the larger community in a wide range of social and intellectual activities. Citing examples from programs across the country, Laufgraben offers a concise and

practical guide to planning, promoting, and assessing common reading initiatives. (2006). ISBN 978-1-889271-53-8. 110 pages. \$35.00.

To order, please go to <http://www.nrcpubs.com/search?q=Common+Reading+Programs%3A+Going+Beyond+the+Book>



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The Toolbox

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The Toolbox is an online professional development newsletter offering innovative, learner-centered strategies for empowering college students to achieve greater success. The newsletter is published six times a year by the National Resource Center for The First-Year Experience and Students in Transition at the University of South Carolina, Columbia, South Carolina.

The online subscription is free. To register for newsletter alerts and access back issues, please visit www.sc.edu/fye/toolbox.

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