

## Lessons in Podcasting: A One Year Retrospective

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Anyone who has had an opportunity to walk around just about any college or university campus in the last few years will likely have noticed the popularity of portable music devices. Once common only on large and/or urban campuses, these devices have become more accessible and popular in society and in higher education. In Carrie Windham's 2007 article, "Confessions of a Podcast Junkie," she indicated that in 2006 these devices were the most popular items on college campuses.

Several years ago, institutions like Duke University helped popularize the devices by providing them to first-year students (Moneta, 2005), and since that time, the portable music device market has grown exponentially. According to Lum (2006), "national studies show that more than 80 percent of college students own at least one device that can download and play recordings" (§ 4). A recent search in *The Chronicle of Higher Education* for articles about these devices yielded over 700 entries, and an Internet search produced countless resources on this subject. With the popularity of portable music devices, it is no wonder many colleges and universities are considering how they can use this medium to reach students, and one way that has become prevalent is podcasting.

Wikipedia (2007) defined podcasting as a method of distributing multimedia files via the Internet for playback on mobile devices and personal computers; the term comes from combining the words "pod" (portable on demand) and "broadcasting." Podcasts can be accessed with a personal computer or any portable music device. Faculty and staff on many college and university campuses are converting lectures and presentations into podcasts and are offering those to students (and others) who wish to download and listen to them.

### *Podcasting: From Our Perspective*

In Spring 2006, we collaborated with the Director of Web Development and Visual Communications on our campus to transform a workshop we created for students on academic probation into a podcast. The original workshop was two hours in length and consisted of exercises to promote goal setting, academic planning and advising, and included information about tutoring and other academic success resources. When we created the podcast, we took the information and divided it into shorter segments or chapters that focused on one concept. The podcast combined our PowerPoint presentation and an audio recording of us presenting the information.

In addition to creating the enhanced podcast (a podcast with visual and audio components), we also used a campus electronic information center, Blackboard, to gather information about the students accessing our podcast and to share handouts. Students could print out copies of the handouts or save them if they wanted to refer to them at a later time. We also used Blackboard to direct students to useful websites we had identified. We tested the podcast and accompanying Blackboard community with students enrolled in our summer bridge program before officially launching everything in Fall 2006.

After making the podcast and Blackboard resources available, we quickly learned that many of our students did not know what a podcast was or how to access it. Although students on our campus had portable music devices, they were using them solely to listen to music. In her article, Windham (2007) wrote about how students who were familiar with podcasting said they had “stumbled” upon it (p. 52). Further in the article she cautioned that we should not presuppose that the students walking around campus with portable music devices are familiar with podcasting (p. 62).

### *Podcasting: Lessons Learned*

In the year since we created our first podcast, several faculty on our campus have begun to record their class lectures and make them available via podcast. Additionally, our Sports Information Department regularly podcasts athletic game information, scores, etc. Now that podcasting has become more common on our campus, our department is beginning to develop new podcasts. We recently recorded a workshop on Academic Integrity that will soon become an enhanced podcast, and our plan is to take several of our popular Academic Success Workshops and develop them into podcasts this year.

Looking back on our initial podcast experience, we are reentering this knowing we may still have to educate our campus about what podcasting is and how it can supplement the many face-to-face learning opportunities in our area. While we didn't have the success we had hoped for with our initial foray into podcasting, we understand that we may have been ahead of the trend on our campus.

As we were finishing this article, podcasting continued to appear on various listserves and websites, including *Student Affairs Online*. Podcasting continues to be a popular topic in higher education, and we look forward to seeing how faculty and staff use this to reach the “Net Gen.”

### References

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