



College of Southern Nevada
3 Campuses in Southern Nevada
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Wimba's Collaborative Capabilities Increases Retention in Courses at the College of Southern Nevada

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-Vartouhi Asherian, Instructional Designer and Professor, College of Southern Nevada

"We're heavily rolling out Wimba for meetings," says Vartouhi Asherian, Instructional Designer and Professor at the College of Southern Nevada. "We've had huge budget cuts at the state level. We have a lot of committees, which are dispersed from our sites, so we're incorporating meetings via Wimba Classroom so everyone can participate. We can't get everyone to come in to our main campuses. That tells us we really need to incorporate the technology that fits our needs. Wimba can make everything easier, bring people closer together, and help us operate more efficiently."

With campuses in Henderson, Las Vegas and North Las Vegas, Nev., the College of Southern Nevada (CSN) serves students within a 42,000-square-mile area across the southern half of the state. In addition to these three campuses, it also has multiple satellite sites and centers, making it the fourth largest single college, multi-campus community college in the country.

CSN's 1,500 faculty serve more than 41,000 students, making CSN the largest college within the Nevada System of Higher Education.

To accommodate these large numbers, CSN's instructional technology department – which is comprised of only four full-time staff members – uses a smart combination of the Wimba Collaboration Suite's synchronous and asynchronous capabilities to easily and confidently serve the educational needs of the school and its students. Wimba's ease-of-use is to thank.

In 2003, the Nevada Online Education Consortium (NOEC) was composed of local school districts and post-secondary institutions such as CSN. NOEC wanted to create a program that would help high school students make a seamless technology transition to college. NOEC believed that adopting a single course management system (CMS) and collaborative solution across all K-12 and higher education institutions was essential for creating this seamless experience. Since the school districts needed synchronous communication and the colleges wanted to better teach languages online while also connecting remote users, NOEC selected Wimba for its collaborative needs.

WIMBA PRODUCTS AND SERVICES

- Wimba Classroom
- Wimba Voice

KEY BENEFITS

- Increase retention rates
- Increase engagement level of students in blended courses
- Save time and money by holding administrative meetings online
- Operate more efficiently

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WHAT THEY'RE SAYING

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ABOUT WIMBA

Wimba develops web-based collaboration software designed for online education, language learning and live interactive communications. Our collaborative applications enable learning professionals to fully embrace the new wave of teaching and learning opportunities afforded by the Internet; regardless of geographic location, bandwidth or operating system. Our classroom collaboration solutions enable educators to conduct live, online classes, meetings, office hours and other collaborations, and our language learning tools add oral interaction directly into course content, webpages, study groups and assessments. With simplicity and power, Wimba adds new dimensions to online, accessible education, enhancing the learning experience for both students and instructors.

CSN started using Wimba Voice in 2004 to enable its foreign language department to add vocal components to its ESL and Romance languages courses. Whether teaching French, German, or Spanish, language instructors commonly create vocal exercises that enable their students to practice speaking and listening to these languages. This vocal component not only enlivens the classes but helps accelerate the students' grasp of languages. "Amazingly, for people who had taken multiple distance education courses, they felt that audio announcements via Wimba Voice were so wonderful that it made them feel that the instructor was present," says Vartouhi Asherian, an instructional designer and professor at the College of Southern Nevada. "They felt connected with the instructor and stayed in the course."

Now, most instructors use Wimba Voice Boards. Language instructors particularly want to hear their students, practice with them, and dialogue with them. But Wimba Voice quickly expanded to other departments, particularly the podcaster and Wimba Voice Presentation.

Asherian said podcasting via Wimba became very useful because previously instructors had to download Audacity, record a podcast, distribute it, set up RSS feeds, etc. "With Wimba, faculty can record a podcast spur-of-the-moment. It takes no time," she said. "They can even import other mp3 audio files in their courses with Wimba. Podcasting has become a really effective tool to get their students more involved."

"I did a study and it indicated that with Wimba voice announcements, students felt closer [to their classmates and instructor] and the instructor

felt more approachable. Students were then more comfortable sending questions and they were more comfortable trying to communicate with their instructor if any issues with their course work came about," she said.

"Wimba is a great compliment. Our language instructors look for the verbal component and they are very satisfied. Wimba helps us connect with the remote sites," Asherian said.

Additionally, many language instructors use Wimba Classroom to hold live online office hours with students throughout the area. These serve as very valuable opportunities to clarify important points and reinforce critical subject matter.

Since 2006, Wimba Classroom has regularly been used across all CSN campuses in many subjects, with uses ranging from offering live online classes to office hours. Wimba Classroom significantly increases the engagement level of an online course, ultimately promoting student success.

"In my statistics class, Wimba Classroom has been a lifesaver. I get questions about normal distribution or something else which is very difficult to answer in words. I invite the student into Wimba Classroom and I draw a bell curve using the whiteboard and my tablet PC pen. I write the formulas as I am talking and archive it. The archive is very valuable since it allows me to send it to any other students who are stuck with the same problem," Asherian said.

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