



## Wimba Increases School's Revenue and Student Productivity at Central Gippsland Institute in Australia

*"Up to 50% of the courses that we now offer online with Wimba were either not practical to offer online before, or if we did there wasn't a good case to do so."*

*-Brad Beach, Innovation & Organisational Development, Central Gippsland Institute of TAFE*

The Central Gippsland Institute of TAFE (Gipps TAFE) is a rural institute with five campuses in Victoria, Australia and one in Melbourne. Although a relatively small institute, it delivers around 1-million student contact hours per year, serving approximately 3,000 students, nearly half of whom learn in a blended environment. That is, these students have face-to-face classes which are supplemented with online technologies. The remaining 1,500 students – from Australia, New Zealand, the United States, and Singapore – study solely online.

### Blended Learning and Entirely Online Learning

Given the even mix of students across the two models of learning – blended and exclusively online – the college has identified clear differences in the issues each category of students face. For instance, blended learners predominantly rely on Blackboard Campus Edition to supplement face-to-face learning activities, whereas students who are exclusively online learners require significantly more online facilitation and interaction. Gipps TAFE also believes that in order for learn-

ing to be successful, it is important that students feel that they are part of a community of learners. Therefore, the college specifically develops synchronous and asynchronous methods of student-teacher communication to help compensate for the fact that their online students don't have the luxury of calling into a campus and seeing their fellow classmates or teachers. Wimba Voice plays a vital role when it comes to increasing this sense of community and communication.

For teachers, Gipps TAFE recognized that lack of interaction within Campus Edition as a significant problem in the delivery of online educational experiences, as educators were required to develop a whole new set of skills to teach text-only. Limitations of text-only also include the facts that it is difficult to describe complex tones as well as the risk that text can be misinterpreted. This is where Wimba comes in.

### Students Jump to use Voice

When offered the option to use voice, Gipps TAFE staff report that students 'jump at it' as an alternative. Additionally, it is the experience of TAFE



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### WIMBA PRODUCTS AND SERVICES

- Wimba Voice

### KEY BENEFITS

Wimba allows Gipps TAFE to offer more courses and therefore receive more revenue. Wimba also allows creates more productive students.

*Brad Beach, Manager, Innovation & Organisational Development, Central Gippsland Institute of TAFE*





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## SAVING TIME AND MONEY

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that the oral mode of learning is critical for some groups such as indigenous learners, learners from a non-English speaking background, and students with disabilities. Apart from the importance of developing oral skills in a range of subject areas, there's a wide range of student groups who find it difficult to learn in the absence of voice.

Further, because some courses cannot be optimally taught within text-only environments, this not only limits the options for students who cannot attend courses on-campus, but limits the income generating ability of the institution.

The need for enhanced communication was found in several courses such as languages and Medical Terminology, as voice was needed for a range of uses from recordings to explaining complex concepts, facilitation of asynchronous discussions involving students from all over the world, and private voice blogs for reflective learning involving a single student and their teacher. Also, voice was needed because TAFE found that many students lacked the necessary keyboarding and grammar skills that would allow them to succeed in a text-only course. These subject areas require detailed explanations of concepts and therefore can be very complex and confusing when conducted solely in text. A range of teaching examples support this analysis including the teaching of the written and spoken aspects of medical terminology, particularly in cross-cultural courses with students from around the world in areas such as Abu Dhabi and the Gippsland area.

"In Medical Terminology courses, the reality is that students need to be able to not only read medical terms, they need to be able to say medical terms," said Brad Beach, Manager, Innovation

& Organisational Development. "Using Voice Boards not only eliminated all of the costs associated with telephone calls and phone conferences, but it also meant that the teacher and the students were freed up to participate at any time of the day and still be able to interact in voice."

Wimba Voice also helped students who, for various reasons, have low levels of literacy or poor English skills. Wimba Voice enables these students to have a positive online experience not burdened with the need for a lot of textual skills.

"The use of Wimba Voice for audio blogging is also proving successful," said Beach. "When you the teacher ask students to record their thoughts orally, you do get a greater insight as the teacher into the thought process that is occurring for that student. An oral form of communication is a much better way of doing it. Wimba Voice makes building community online far more achievable for teachers than working in a text-only environment. The quality of student experiences is higher and teachers are able to teach more easily.

"We have very few difficulties... and to be absolutely frank it's actually much easier to get a teacher to engage with voice board technologies than it is with a text environment. They're easier to use... I don't think I've seen a technology that is so easily taken up by teachers from a technical point of view...it's very very intuitive. So the uptake has been significant," continued Beach.

TAFE also finds the ease-of-use to be pivotal, especially in terms of how Wimba Voice works within Campus Edition. "It's a nice, smooth, seamless integration between [Campus Edition and Wimba]," said Vanessa Marsh, Innovation and Organisational Development. Added Beach, "[Wimba's integration with Campus Edition] really does make it much easier for the teachers."



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### *Wimba Saves Time and Increases Course Offerings*

Teachers at Gipps TAFE find it easier to teach with Wimba Voice and the quality of the learning experience for students is higher. "Wimba Voice actually allows you to expand the pedagogical repertoire of teachers and they therefore are able to cover a much greater range of online programmes," said Beach. "The impact on teachers and students is immense, as Wimba Voice enhances the quality of education whilst reducing time and effort for teachers. This combination means happier and more productive staff and more satisfied students."

Beach adds that from a business point of view, using Wimba Voice within online courses has allowed Gipps TAFE to expand the number of courses that it's able to offer. "It's a difficult figure to really pin down but I would suggest that it's probably up to 50% of the courses that we now offer online were either not practical to offer online before, or if we did there wasn't a good case to do so. The ability to expand the number of courses offered online translates directly to higher capacity for enrollment and higher levels of revenue."

### *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.

