



## Great Basin College Increases Retention Rates with the Wimba Collaboration Suite

*"Our online courses using Wimba have a 5-7% higher retention rate than online courses using Blackboard alone."*

*-Lisa Frazier, Curriculum Development Specialist, Great Basin College*

Great Basin College (GBC) serves students spread across more than 60,000 square miles of rural central Nevada. In the early 2000's after using Blackboard as the foundation of its online courses, GBC established satellite campuses with interactive video-equipped classrooms to provide its dispersed students with synchronous learning options but quickly learned that interactive video still posed limitations and lacked the quality needed for many courses. To improve its distance program, GBC established LiveNet, the campus-branded application of Wimba Classroom within Blackboard, to provide students with increased access and more personal interactivity in synchronous and asynchronous learning. And after less than two years of use, GBC's online courses using Wimba have a 5-7% higher retention rate than online courses using Blackboard alone.

When Great Basin College realized in the mid-2000's that it needed to improve its distance education courses, it first conducted an extensive evaluation of synchronous learning environments and virtual classroom applications under the premise that it needed to improve interac-

tion within its distance courses and needed to make collaborative classes more widely available to students throughout the entire state of Nevada. After all, its video-equipped classrooms were only useful if the students – who often live more than an hour from a campus – can actually get to a classroom. After thoroughly evaluating five products, Wimba Classroom prevailed. According to Lisa Frazier, Curriculum Development Specialist at GBC, Wimba Classroom was selected because it is "designed specifically for classroom use and is fundamentally and pedagogically superior in the way it supports interaction with and among students. It also integrates effortlessly with the school's CMS, Blackboard."

Wimba Classroom is Wimba's virtual classroom, supporting audio, video, application sharing, and content display, enabling instructors to add vitally important elements of interaction that simply cannot be provided in a text-based course.



Great Basin College  
Elko, NV  
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### WIMBA PRODUCTS AND SERVICES

- Wimba Classroom
- Wimba Voice

### KEY BENEFITS

Retention rates in online courses rose by 7%

Saved thousands of dollars on antiquated video conferencing equipment  
"Effortless" integration with Blackboard

### *Lisa Frazier*

*Curriculum Development Specialist,  
Great Basin College*





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## WIMBA IS A COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE

*"Increased connection among faculty and dispersed students via Wimba has become a competitive differentiator for GBC."*

*-Lisa Frazier, Curriculum Development Specialist, Great Basin College*

Wimba Classroom allows faculty to personalize their online courses by holding live, online classes, office hours, guest lectures, webcasts, and meetings. Great Basin College uses Wimba Classroom to teach disciplines ranging from math to survey courses.

In addition to Wimba Classroom, GBC also relies on Wimba Voice for asynchronous voice interaction. Used as the hub of its language courses, these web-based voice tools facilitate and promote vocal instruction, collaboration, coaching, and assessment. They also increase the interaction and student engagement level of any online class by allowing faculty and students to easily embed vocal interactions into the page level of their Blackboard courses.

In less than a year, LiveNet, powered by Wimba and Blackboard, already began replacing the school's established interactive video system and is expected to do so entirely in the near future. The student response has been dramatic, due in large part to the broad faculty adoption GBC has enjoyed, and due to Wimba Classroom's seamless integration into the faculty's already-familiar Blackboard online course environment.

### **Great Basin College's Students are from Challenging Backgrounds**

Many Great Basin College students are swing-shift Nevada mine workers or Native Americans who desire to remain among their home communities. Many of them enroll in distance education courses so they can participate in classes on their own time as they juggle work or community responsibilities. GBC faculty enjoys increased ability to explain difficult concepts and hold office hours online. Students and faculty benefit from LiveNet's ease of use, its preservation of live interaction—and the human aspects of educa-

tion that translate through Wimba's synchronous learning environment.

GBC's students face many obstacles to signing up for and completing college courses. Faculty also face many obstacles in providing quality education and student support, as it takes eight hours to drive from GBC's main center in Elko to the Pahrump center in Southern Nevada. Moreover, content for GBC's online mathematics, language, and survey courses was taking instructors hundreds of hours to create in the online environment. Wimba solved all these problems.

One surprise was the sound quality Wimba delivered; this was best scene during one "ah hah" moment in 2007. A tearful student approached administrators concerned that she'd have to drop her courses after her husband was transferred to a gold mine in Peru. She had just recently returned to college after raising a family and was a mere semester away from graduation. GBC and the student together devised a plan that would allow her to attend class using Wimba's Wimba Classroom from Peru.

### **Great Results**

According to Frazier, students are performing better due to regular participation in classes and personal connection with their teachers and other dispersed students. Wimba's technology allows for easier teaching of foreign languages, mathematic solutions, and scientific concepts online. LiveNet can now reach more students across the state, the archiving capabilities support accreditation measurements, and faculty can now re-use course materials more easily. Increased connection among faculty and dispersed students has become a competitive differentiator for GBC.



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### ***Improved Retention Rates!***

GBC's online courses using Wimba in addition to the Blackboard environment have a 5-7% higher retention rate than online courses using Blackboard alone. Frazier says that retention rates in her online courses have risen from 79%-84% since the addition of Wimba. This is also reflected in student satisfaction surveys and course evaluations. Seven percent is a very meaningful number when students who usually can't sign up and complete courses are now signing up, completing, and loving their experience.

### ***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.

