



Largest School in North America Enables Students and Faculty to Instantly Communicate with Pronto

"It's honest-to-God the one tool that revolutionized my relationship with my students and with my colleagues."

-Bonnie Willy, Associate Professor of Computer Information Systems and Computer Information Technology, Ivy Tech Community College

With more than 100,000 students, Ivy Tech Community College (ITCC) is the largest accredited school in North America. ITCC has 14 regional sites located throughout Indiana, offering both undergraduate and technical courses to its students, all of whom either commute to campus to take their courses remotely. And since its new president set into motion a plan to map out an enhanced distance education strategy for the school, ITCC has also become the fastest growing institution in the state. Therefore, to help compensate for its influx of students, ITCC adopted Wimba Pronto in Spring 2007 in order to offer the easiest means of spontaneous, instant communication between students and instructors.

Upon implementing Wimba Pronto, it only took a few months for more than 7,000 students and faculty to start using it for instant, informal communication.

"A strong part of our enrollment is our online education program," says Dr. Kara Monroe, Executive Director, Center for Instructional Technology at ITCC. Also an adjunct Math instructor, Dr.

Monroe says ITCC's distance education program offers 350 classes that serve more than 17,000 students. "Our online classes are offered by all Ivy Tech campuses. For example, in one semester a student might have faculty located in Indianapolis, Muncie, Fort Wayne, or Richmond. Their instructors and classmates could all be from all these different locations."

In order to bridge the communication void inherent to many distance-only courses, ITCC relies on Wimba Pronto to foster communication among students and faculty. "We rolled out Pronto about a year ago. Sometimes it's used for one-to-one communication between students and faculty but in some classes it's the primary means of communication in any class. We use it for a lot of administrative functions and it's used for a lot of student-to-student communication and for group study sessions. It's a great tool for communication among students."



Ivy Tech Community College
Indianapolis, IN
www.ivytech.edu

WIMBA PRODUCTS AND SERVICES

- Wimba Pronto

KEY BENEFITS

- Secure, campus-based IM
- Increased interaction between faculty and students
- Students feel connected to the college community
- Immediate feedback when studying

Dr. Kara Monroe, Executive Director, Center for Instructional Technology, Ivy Tech Community College





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SECURE INTERACTIONS VIA PRONTO

"Many faculty have used IM for a long time but they needed a 3rd party software to do so. But Pronto streamlines the process. [Pronto] gathers names, it allows faculty to see at a glance which students are on Pronto, and it organizes them by course."

-Dr. Kara Monroe, Executive Director, Center Instructional Technology

To Dr. Monroe, one of the biggest advantages of Wimba Pronto is that it ties directly into its school's Blackboard courses. This means that Wimba Pronto resides entirely within ITCC's academic network and therefore correlates students and faculty specifically to their courses.

"Many faculty have used IM for a long time but they needed a 3rd party software to do so. But Pronto streamlines the process," she says. "[Pronto] gathers names, it allows faculty to see at a glance which students are on Pronto, and it organizes them by course. For faculty who teach a lot of different courses each semester they don't have to wonder, 'What Yahoo username is that?'"

Robbie Morse, Instructional Designer for the Center for Instructional Technology at Ivy Tech, leads course development initiatives for statewide distance education courses. He works with most of the educational technologies that Ivy Tech makes available to its thousands of faculty and believes that using Pronto allows the human component to shine through.

"One of my jobs is to ask myself how do I provide an instructor with the ability to add his own personality to his course when he's using the same content everyone else is. Pronto does that," Morse says. "Even if content is the same it doesn't have to be taught same way. Faculty need to add their own personality. Pronto is a great way for them to connect to their students, whether it's through online office hours or if they're available at any other time."

From a non-instructional perspective, Morse participates in regular meetings with the 13 other Ivy Tech sites to discuss instructional technology. This involved driving to sites throughout the state, ranging from Evansville in the south

to Gary in the north. Now, with Pronto, he can get answers quickly and sometimes even forgo meetings altogether.

"I use the Groups feature in Pronto a lot. I'll often add all the distance education coordinators to one group so I can view them that way," says Morse. "Pronto provides that flexibility to approach it from a course perspective (in Blackboard) or a group perspective."

Associate Professor of Computer Information Systems and Computer Information Technology, Bonnie Willy, shared another example of peer-to-peer collaboration via Pronto. Willy is a member of a statewide initiative between Ivy Tech and Indiana high schools which allows senior high school students to take courses at Ivy Tech that count as both high school and college credit. Her group often met face-to-face but had little way to stay in touch and/or collaborate when away from one another. But Pronto changed this for the better. "I was writing a proposal one night and saw another NACEF colleague on Pronto and asked, 'is this sentence close?'" Willy said. "I just copied and pasted the sentence from my document into Pronto and got instant feedback. It was rewritten by a colleague in Sellersburg (on the Southern border of Indiana) hours away. I saw the Pronto green dot and we collaborated instantly."

From a teaching and learning perspective, Willy uses Pronto to give help to students in her CIS 101 class and in her Microsoft server classes. Willy teaches students in seven counties in Eastern Indiana which include cities such as Muncie, Marion, and Anderson. She believes that Pronto allows her to give the immediate feedback that can make or break a student's success.



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LIVELY INSTRUCTION WITH WIMBA

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“With email, there’s not only a delay in responding but the spontaneity is gone,” Willy says. “With Pronto, I call it the ‘spark of spontaneity.’”

Typically, Willy is online most evenings and is therefore able to use Pronto to give immediate feedback to students in all her different courses and sections. For instance, she was able to connect students in two different classes so they could work together to solve a common problem.

“A student Pronto’d me and another student Pronto’d me from a different class,” Willy says. “I said, ‘I know this case study is from my CIS 227 class but this applies to both students.’ So I opened up Pronto so they could chat amongst themselves. Once they started chatting I just let it roll. I opened the chat and that’s where my role ended. I had students chatting with each other who were not in the same class, and I think that’s powerful.”

Willy continues, “If I’m on at 2:00a.m. and I see that five students are logged in, I’ll send them a

note and see if they need any help. It’s live. It’s right there. Sunday night I had a student doing ip config commands. I had him copy and paste it into Pronto and I saw his backlash was wrong. That would have taken minutes on the phone to solve something so simple.”

In addition to her students in Eastern Indiana, she also has students in New York and even two in Iraq. She says she’s only “one green dot away.” “When they see a green dot, they know I’m there.”

As Pronto continues to flourish among faculty and students at Ivy Tech, it’s easy to see that all users will continue to benefit from spontaneous informal communication. After all, teaching and learning doesn’t stop when a student leaves the classroom.

“I love Pronto!” Willy added. “It’s honest-to-God the one tool that revolutionized my relationship with my students and with my colleagues.”

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.

