



From Online Classes to Virtual Help Desks and Group Work, Wimba's Flexibility Helps Michigan Students Excel

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-William Drummond, Lead Producer, Online and Multimedia/eLearning Specialist, Lawrence Technological University

In mid-February 2009, a distinguished scholar visited a Nonprofit Management class at Lawrence Technological University (LTU) and the class's regular professor naturally asked the scholar to hold a lecture and discussion with his students. Using Wimba Classroom to record every aspect of the in-class lecture, all audible and visual elements were captured for later review and the visiting scholar's lecture has since been shared with classes around the entire university.

This is just one of numerous examples of how LTU has found myriad uses of Wimba Classroom, uses that stretch far beyond offering live, online classes.

Located just north of Detroit, LTU is a private university offering undergraduate, masters, and doctoral programs in concentrations ranging from business and architecture to engineering and mathematics. Its four colleges, Architecture, Arts and Sciences, Engineering, and Management, help provide its students with a technical education and have helped LTU consistently rank among US News & World Report's top tier of Master's universities in the Midwest. In fact, LTU

ranked 37th out of several hundred Midwestern universities in 2007.

Linking theory and practice with advanced learning technologies, LTU's mission is to provide superior undergraduate, graduate, and lifelong learning for leadership, professional achievement, and civic excellence, and has earned a reputation for rigorous programs. Student projects that apply classroom studies are a hallmark - from solar-powered housing and other alternative energy initiatives, to urban design projects that aid the development of neighborhoods and communities. Each LTU undergrad receives a customized high-end laptop included with tuition, and LTU was Michigan's first wireless laptop campus. New programs and exciting new degrees aim to prepare a new breed of business savvy, globally-aware professionals.

To ensure LTU maintains its technological edge over many of its peer institutions, it utilizes the entire Wimba Collaboration Suite to ensure its students can enjoy engaging and communicative online courses.



Lawrence Technological University
Southfield, MI
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WIMBA PRODUCTS AND SERVICES

- Wimba Classroom

KEY BENEFITS

- Students are better engaged and have improved grades
- Can capture lecture for 24/7 review
- Versatility of Wimba allows LTU to offer virtual classes, help desks, training sessions, group work, and more

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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.

In the early 2000's, LTU had a web conferencing system that was "fairly rudimentary in its functions, and resource-intensive to support," according to Bill Drummond, Lead Producer, LTU Online and Multimedia/eLearning Specialist, VITRC. After quickly realizing his faculty and fellow instructional technologists needed more, LTU conducted a quick exploration and immediately found its answer.

"We wanted a system that integrated with Blackboard, had advanced features, and included help desk support," said Drummond. "Wimba suited our needs."

Wimba Classroom, a robust, virtual learning environment that includes audio, video, application sharing and content display, integrates seamlessly into course management systems such as Blackboard to ensure easy administration and access by faculty and students. This integration makes it a perfect fit for institutions looking to expand the collaborative aspects of their online courses and meetings.

Interestingly, though LTU's online courses are almost entirely asynchronous, Drummond and his colleagues and faculty find many uses for Wimba Classroom in these courses, including holding virtual office hours, enabling student group work, and recording in-class lectures.

It's these creative uses of Wimba Classroom that have enabled LTU to excel, yet Drummond realizes they've barely scraped the surface when it comes to utilizing synchronous classroom technology.

"Wimba is well-entrenched now at Lawrence Tech," he says. "Faculty and students, whether online or on ground, would find it difficult to function without such a system. I believe we

have only begun to realize the benefits this system can bring to the university. As more faculty and students understand its power, usage will become ubiquitous."

The benefits have been many. Drummond says that Wimba Classroom has given his institution another way for learning to take place any time, anywhere. While he says the value Wimba has added to his institution is difficult to quantify, the intangible benefits have been enormous.

"I believe few other technologies we have offered to our faculty and students have added a greater value," Drummond says with a smile. "It is truly a 'killer application.'"

And while anyone can describe Wimba Classroom as a 'killer application,' the proof ultimately boils down to student success – and there's plenty of evidence of Wimba doing its part to help create successful students.

"Another example is of a faculty member who runs Wimba Classroom while conducting an on-ground class, recording as she goes," Drummond explains. "Her students then have a record of the entire class to review. She reports increased learning because, in her opinion, students are no longer concentrating on taking notes; they know they will be able to review later and are thus able to fully engage while in class."

Better engagement and increased learning at the same time. There's the proof.