

Edison Online Connect

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From the Editor's Desk –

I want to thank all of you for taking the time to read last month's premier issue of *Edison Online Connect*, and a special note of gratitude to those who sent congratulatory notes. My fan mail folder is bursting at the seams!

This is a very exciting week for the Edison Online staff, as we prepare for our upcoming Fall Institute on October 16 and 17. We welcome your attendance and participation. Faculty may register by following this link

<http://www.edison.edu/techtraining/stafftrainingeventsall.php#>

Interspersed among the TLC listings, you will find our two listings:

- Fall Faculty Institute for Edison Online: Friday Session
- Fall Faculty Institute for Edison Online: Conference Day

You may register for one or both days. The Friday afternoon session will include discussion sessions followed by a social hour. The full-day Saturday session will begin with coffee, followed by presentations and discussion

sessions. Our featured keynote speaker, Dr. Roy McTarnaghan will speak to us immediately after lunch, and we will end with a presentation about charting the future of Edison Online. Share tips with other online faculty, learn about our state-of-the-art technologies, and meet our staff. We promise you two days of challenging, stimulating discussion and communication. This institute is open to interested faculty as well as current online faculty.

For registration questions, please contact Erich Hochmeister at ehochmeister@edison.edu

Meet the Staff and Faculty of Edison Online

As we continue to introduce those who contribute to the success of Edison Online, this month we present Professor Rona Axelrod, full time faculty member in the Mathematics Department, Chairperson of the eLearning Committee and Faculty Chair of Edison Online. We are grateful for her commitment and support.

Rona was born in Brooklyn, New York. Raised in *Edison*, New Jersey, it was inevitable she would find her way to Edison State College. She earned her B.A. degree from the University of Rochester with a major in Statistics, and went on to earn her M.S. in Statistics from Rutgers. She worked as an actuary, a computer programmer, and a PC trainer before her husband, Barry, accepted a position with an internet startup in Florida. With their move to this area, Rona became the network administrator for a local interior design firm.

Rona is mom to three boys (as Rona puts it, *one of each* – ask for an explanation when you see her). Her youngest son is a high school junior and the two oldest attend the University of Florida. Rona and her husband have been married for 22 years. Barry is now an IT director for Collier County.

Rona began her career at Edison in 2002, joining us as an adjunct teaching dual enrollment classes at Bishop Verot. Rona credits Dr. Pendleton, then Dean of the College of Arts & Sciences, and Professor JoAnn Lewin of the Mathematics Department for encouraging her to take that giant leap into academia. It was meant to be. Once Rona began teaching, she was hooked.

Two years later, Rona became a full-time faculty member. She began teaching online statistics courses in the fall of 2005. What Rona particularly enjoys about teaching online classes is the marriage of her two loves – teaching and technology.

I asked Rona about differences between face-to-face and online learning environments. She comments that although the learning outcome is the same, a student suffering from a bit of math anxiety might feel more comfortable sending an email to the professor rather than risk the embarrassment of asking a question in the classroom. When Rona identifies a pattern of confusion in student emails, she will post to the discussion board to clarify the topic. This opens up the discussion to the entire class and often results in additional emails exchanged among the students.

Teaching Online Courses – Tips from Faculty

This month's tips come to us from Professor Lana Hoffman who teaches our career exploration and career management classes. In addition to her MBA, Lana is a Master Level Certified Practitioner for Psychological Assessment and Evaluation.

One of the biggest challenges Lana faced in designing the online versions of her courses was modifying them to compensate for the loss of a significant amount of face-to-face student/teacher contact – a key element of her on-ground courses. The solution has been in her very successful use of the chat room.

Here's what Lana would like to share with us – first and foremost, everybody's an extrovert in the chat room! It's fun and easy to speak up in a non-threatening environment. This is particularly meaningful to a shy student. As one of her students said recently – *I love this because nobody can see me; nobody knows what I have on. I walk into a classroom and I feel a little self-conscious, but I'm not feeling self-conscious right now.* When another student wanted to know what the first student was wearing, it introduced a little levity to the group. As Lana put it – “they were cool and cute and they liked it. They were funny.”

Lana believes chat rooms are a critically important tool in building a sense of community within the online class. She requires her students to sign up for chat sessions at which she is present.

Students begin by introducing themselves to the group. Lana has observed a mystique about the chat room – the same feeling you get when you've spoken to someone repeatedly on the phone. You draw a visual image in your mind and hope to meet that person some day. In fact, because her students have enjoyed and benefited from the camaraderie of the chat room, they are planning to meet in person at the end of the semester. What could be better for students focused on career change than to perfect their networking skills with their peers?

Realizing her students' lives are affected by commitments to family and work, Lana is careful to schedule her chat sessions at varying times throughout the week. She suggests faculty strive to keep their schedules more flexible than their students'.

I will pass along two other thoughtful comments from Lana – in some ways, online classes require students to take greater responsibility to teach themselves. In Lana's online classes, students learn to evaluate the results of their assessment tools. In her on-ground classes, Lana took a more direct role in their evaluation. Lana concludes there's no better training we can give students than *to teach them to teach themselves*.

The last thing I spoke about with Lana is *nurturing* – in the first month of fall semester, Lana received and responded to more than 132 emails from her students. That's a lot of student-professor interaction. Through emails and the chat room, Lana realized she's interacted more with her online students than she did in the traditional classroom.

Our thanks to Lana for these wonderful insights....

Would you like to share your tips for teaching successfully in the online learning environment? Write to me at aposner@edison.edu

eLearning Technology

This is the second part of my interview with Erich Hochmeister, our Training

and Development Specialist, about the newest technologies we are implementing at Edison Online. Last month we discussed the introduction of Wimba and Wimba Voice. This month we examine the introduction of streaming video.

In the past, we've relied on Apple's iTunes U to enable faculty to create their own audio, video and podcasts which were then housed in a repository of Edison State College materials within iTunes U. Although not a true streaming solution, we've had much success with this product within the iTunes family, allowing us to embed links to audio and video presentations which resided on the internet.

With the introduction of Vidego, our new streaming video solution, we have the ability to embed video directly into a CE6 webpage, similar to playing a video embedded in an online news article or watching a video on YouTube. By utilizing streaming technology, you can offer your students an improved level of communication with greater interactive content. It's no longer necessary for the student to open a separate software application (e.g., iTunes U) or download a large, cumbersome file in order to view video.

Our Vidego solution is delivered as a combined effort from two companies. The first provider, Multicast, is the producer of the Vidego interface and brand. The Vidego interface offers easy uploading of video. Users can then access embedding codes which can be used to add the video as a link on the CE6 webpage or open in a separate pop-up window, thus *streaming* the video directly into your course from another location.

Limelight Networks provides the video *storage* solution and streaming Internet bandwidth for the Vidego product. Limelight's servers allow for simultaneous

access by as many students as might need that video. If this were attempted while storing within CE6, multiple students accessing a video simultaneously could potentially overwhelm our connection, resulting in slow downloading and delays in transmission.

Here at the eLearning Center, we have a variety of software applications and hardware to assist in creating media presentations. Among these are:

Camtasia – for recording on-screen activity or PowerPoint presentations, then converting the screen capture to polished video presentations

Jing – a free software application used to create short desktop recordings

iPod recording – we have available iPod accessories which will create voice recordings that can be uploaded to iTunes. I use this technology for close-range interviews when creating this newsletter.

Flip Video – pocket-size camcorders which create downloadable videos, also easily uploaded to social or video networking sites like Facebook or YouTube. It's also possible to stream these videos *from* the social/video networking sites using our new streaming technology.

As Dean Myers has suggested in the past, don't allow yourself to become overwhelmed by the myriad of options available to you. Begin by focusing on just one technology that interests you or would be effective in your online learning environment, and become proficient in that technology.

