



## Investigating Institutional Podcasting at Penn State

### The Podcasts at Penn State Project is Providing New Insights into Institutional Approaches to Sharing Digital Media

During the Fall 2006 semester, a pilot program was initiated to study how the use of podcasting might influence students' learning. Podcasting gives students and faculty the ability to record MP3 files and broadcast their presentations, language practice sessions, interviews, and much more for download onto computers and MP3 devices such as an iPod if they wish. They can listen to these as they go about their daily routine.

Podcasting, just as many other technologies have done, has extended the learning experience beyond the classroom. To better determine the size and kind of effect podcasts have had on learning and teaching at Penn State, students from eight courses using podcasting were surveyed online. The purpose of the survey was to assess the effectiveness of using podcasting in learning and teaching.

#### The Study

Email invitations to participate were sent to 769 students enrolled in eight different courses, whose instructors had agreed to participate in this pilot. A total of 172 students responded to the invitation for a response rate of 22.4%.

The distribution of respondents by gender was 48.4% male and 51.6% female. The majority of respondents (94%) were from University Park campus, followed by PS Harrisburg (5%) and 1% from Worthington Scranton (Worthington conducted their own assessment and the results from this are reflected toward the end of this report).

The majority of participants were 18-21 years of age (68%), and were juniors (26%), freshmen (24%), seniors (22%), or sophomores (20%). Students were asked to rate their computer skills from novice to expert. The majority of respondents (69.6%) expressed their level of computer skills as proficient, followed by expert (28%) and novice (2.4%).

#### Podcasting Applications

In these courses, instructors used several approaches to the application of podcasts. In some courses, podcasts were instructor's lectures recorded in class and made available for later listening and review through iTunes U. Some instructors recorded lessons or lesson enhancements for students to access. In yet other courses, students themselves created the podcasts as an assignment or as part of course requirements.



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When asked how they used the podcasts, students responded that they use them to review class lectures (15%) or supplement the class activities (20%) or both (13%). 25% did not use the podcasts at all and 11% use them to catch up on missed classes. Other uses were: (a) all of the above, (b) to listen to classmates' presentations, and (c) extra credit and quiz questions.

Students' experiences with podcasting were widely varied. The majority of the respondents (74%) had never used podcasts before taking the course. After being enrolled in one of the courses utilizing podcasts, students were asked to answer survey questions about their experiences. Other relevant information gathered was:

- The majority (84%) had downloaded podcasts only for their course and not for nonacademic (recreational) use and 48% do so 1 or 2 times per week. They had either listened to instructor podcasts or created podcasts only as a course requirement.
- The 16% who reported downloading podcasts for non-class listen to news, radio news from home country, sports, interviews, financial reports, music and comedy shows.
- The majority of respondents (77%) listen to a podcast only once. 18.6% listen twice, and 4.5% listen to a podcast three or more times.
- Seventy-four percent (74%) had downloaded and listened to the podcasts on a computer. 14% listened on their iPods or 2% on MP3 devices.
- Students downloaded their podcasts through ANGEL CMS (35%) or from iTunes U (21%) or podcasts.psu.edu (20%).
- Forty-eight percent (48%) used instructor's podcasts either for reviewing class lectures or to supplement class activities. They often listen while reviewing their class lecture notes (54%) or textbook (39%) or class Power-Point slides (30%).
- Fifty-five percent (55%) found listening to podcasts helpful in preparing for class or online discussions.
- In spite of 74% having never used a podcast before, 86% found podcasts easy to use.

Students listen to their podcasts mostly between 6 PM and 9 PM (47.6%) or 10 PM and midnight (41%) while at home. The distribution is shown below. Eight percent (8.1%) listen while walking/riding to class and replies included in "Other" were "anywhere, anyplace, anytime," "while working," "in a waiting room," "and "when I have nothing else to do."

Student felt that the use of podcasts in the course did not decrease their use of print course materials (43%) or help them manage their coursework and other responsibilities any better (41% were neutral). When asked if they spend too much time trying to download the podcasts, 36% disagreed, 28% strongly disagreed, and 26% were neutral.

Students responded similarly when asked if they spent a lot of time trying to find a computer to use to download the podcasts. Thirty-nine percent (39%) disagreed, 33% strongly disagreed, and 25% were neutral. Neither did the use of podcasts make the assignments more interesting for most. Forty-five percent (45%) were neutral, while 23% disagreed and 17% agreed, but they did not find them distracting either. The overall experience was positive, as 63% said they would recommend using podcasts to friends.

The Spring 2007 Pilot will consist of over 125 sections with a focus on high enrollment courses. Some of the more interesting courses currently participating in the Spring 2007 pilot include several foreign language courses, business courses, and new media courses.

## Pilot Highlights

### 35 Sections Participated

Initially, 50 sections requested spaces with 35 of them active during the semester. Those who did participate contributed on average five podcasts during the semester

### Podium Podcasting

We were surprised to find that fewer faculty took advantage of tools to podcast directly from the podium.

### Podcasting Spaces

While iTunes U was used in a majority of the sections who took part in the podcasting pilot, several faculty chose to use the Penn State Podcast site because it allowed for active collaboration through comments

### Podcasts and Course Review

54% of students reported using their class notes and 39% reported using their textbooks along with their podcasts to review course material.

## Learn More

To learn more about the Podcasts at Penn State project you can visit us at <http://podcasts.psu.edu>, send email to [podcasts@psu.edu](mailto:podcasts@psu.edu), or contact Cole Camplese at [cole@psu.edu](mailto:cole@psu.edu).

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