

Fordham Goes High-Tech; Holds First Internet Course

By Matt Law

Fordham University brought technology into the classrooms this semester with the addition of a teleconferencing course, as well as a Biology class taught over the Internet.

"We've made enormous strides," said Rev. Robert R. Grimes, S.J., Dean of Fordham College at Lincoln Center, when asked about technology as a teaching tool. Grimes stressed the importance of using the latest technology as more than just a replacement of film projectors of yesterday. "If that's all it is, then we've wasted a lot of money."

Over the summer, Fordham installed a video conferencing system between the Rose Hill and Lincoln Center campuses. After some testing, Grimes thought the system was ready for use. When the Classical Language and Cultures Department couldn't fill a complete section of Intermediate Greek, Grimes decided to use the new technology to hold class.

Professor Clement Kheun taught four students in the Bronx on one day of the week, as five FCLC students watched on a monitor installed in LL 309. On another day of the week, Kheun taught on the Lincoln Center campus in the same classroom. "We were very careful to hold on to the personal contact," said Grimes.

Last month, Kheun was offered a

job elsewhere, which he accepted. Rather than cancel the course, a Graduate Assistant is teaching the FCLC students and the two remaining students at Rosh Hill are doing an independent tutorial for credit, said Grimes.

Grimes said that there were some minor technical problems at the Rose Hill campus, which included occasional clicks in the video feed. Fleur Eshgi, Director of Instructional Technology at Fordham, stressed that the technical difficulties were small. "The system is still being developed. It is still under construction," she explained.

Some minor refinements are still

educational tool although his students rarely see a classroom. Simon is teaching an Internet Perspective of Biology class this semester. The class is based around a web site, he explained.

Simon has taught the introductory biology class before in his three years at Fordham, but this is the first time he is teaching it over the Internet. "The Internet course has a different way of teaching the same material," he said.

Simon's previous students are no strangers to technology. Rather than requiring a textbook in his previous classes, Simon would make CD-ROM's with the class lectures and notes.

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being made to the system, but the technology is expected to be ready by next semester, said Grimes. "CBA (College of Business Administration) is exploring the possibility of offering a teleconferencing course next semester," he said.

Biology Professor Eric Simon has also managed to use technology as an

This semester, the students check the web site every week, rather than attend a weekly lecture. There, they find the week's notes, self-tests, and a question forum to share thoughts with their professor and fellow students. There is also an anonymous journal where they can express their opinions about the class, the tests, or anything

else without fear of repercussions. "Even I don't know who said what," said Simon, who also fills the role of webmaster.

"I've learned just as much in his Internet-based class as I have learned in a class that I attended physically," said Joyce Smith-Chandler, FCLS '00. Smith-Chandler registered for the Internet-based course because she liked the idea of attending class at any hour of the day.

She is also one of ten students using a Rocket E-Book, small personal computers donated by manufacturer NuvoMedia for the class. The user can download the week's notes on to the device, and view them from anywhere, freeing students from the confines of their homes or offices. "I like it because it is small, compact and it's easy to use," she said.

Next semester, Simon will be conducting a study to examine the differences between the Internet course and the classroom course. He will be teaching two sections of the same material. One will be modeled after this semester's Internet course, while the other will follow the more traditional classroom setting. Course material will remain identical. "It's exactly the same course," he said. ■