



Editorial: New and Improved Tools for Today's Learners

by Nicole Adrian

Using classroom or course tools to improve the thinking process for higher education students can take many forms. Often, it seems these new and improved forms involve technology. It's amazing what technology can do these days—and it's always amazing to see the ways in which it can be used.

I haven't been out of college too long—I graduated within the last decade—and it's incredible to see the changes in teaching and learning methods even in the last few years. I remember nothing about taking online courses, using internet programs in courses and communicating with fellow students and professors through web-based means, other than the occasional e-mail.

But things have changed, and have changed rather quickly. This issue of *Higher Education Brief* details how new learning and teaching methods—tools for the classroom—are preparing today's learners.

In their article, Jamison V. Kovach and Lee Revere describe how students are clamoring for more technology to build relationships, communicate in real time and engage in the learning process. They detail frequently used methods for engaging online students through effective course design and technology integration. These methods include discussion boards, blogs, Twitter and YouTube.

Graham Smith from Michigan's Kellogg Community College in Michigan also writes about using Twitter and YouTube to aid in off-campus tutoring for entry-level math courses. Educators create videos that address difficult exercises and concepts in their homework and post the videos on YouTube. Then, the video link is placed in a tweet, from a teacher's Twitter account, and sent out to students.

From each of this issue's articles, it's clear that new—and usually improved—learning tools are bolstering education and the ways in which students learn and communicate. As Kovach and Revere write, "Technology that is integrated into the course design effectively fosters student engagement, builds a learner-centered environment and makes course content come alive."