

SafeAssignment Piloted to Detect Plagiarism

Ever suspect that once-struggling student who turns in a surprisingly well-written paper might have gotten some help from the Internet?

This semester, the university is conducting a campus-wide pilot of an advanced plagiarism prevention system called SafeAssignment from MyDropBox.

All faculty are invited to try the program during this free trial period. It can be accessed either within Blackboard or through a standalone version.

"Faculty members teaching English courses, sections of the first year seminar, and online courses previously had access to anti-plagiarism software," explains Associate Provost Tim Hall. "But we encourage all instructors to have writing components in their courses, so it's important this kind of tool be available throughout the university. Whether you're in business, philosophy, or law, this program makes it easier to determine if student work is original."

Mike McCready, director of the University Writing and Speech Program, has utilized MyDropBox in the past.

"It's very important in this age when so much information is available that students understand what plagiarism is," he notes. "Many do not. When they go online and see information in so many different places that basically says the same thing, they think it's common knowledge and can be copied verbatim."

Instructors can manually check suspect material with the same Internet search engines used by students, but SafeAssignment does that automatically.

"Submitted papers are compared against an Internet archive of over 8 billion documents, scholastic and news

databases with over 9 million articles, and all papers previously submitted to the system here at Ole Miss," Hall explains. "The instructor gets a report indicating what percentage of the paper is similar to other documents and comparing the student's text with that of suspected sources."

While it acts as a deterrent, McCready stresses that using SafeAssignment is only one element in preventing plagiarism.

"It helps if assignments require students to incorporate their own experiences or voice into the work," says McCready. "If they do research, we should teach them how to paraphrase, how to take ideas and translate those into their own language. They need to understand they must credit their sources, and doing so will increase their credibility as a writer, speaker, or any other role in life."

According to Hall, the pilot of SafeAssignment is

"It's definitely a labor saving device."

—Ajit Sadana, *Academic Discipline Committee chair*

a natural follow-up to last year's implementation of a new online system for processing academic dishonesty cases.

"The Academic Discipline Standing Committee felt we could do more to get everyone at the university working together to address this problem," he says. "The online system has been extraordinarily successful, and I've just been amazed at how much more convenient the whole process is now."

"It's definitely a labor saving device," concurs Ajit Sadana, committee chair and professor of chemical engineering. "All the steps are online, and we have the ability to upload any supplementary documents with this system,

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Working While You Wait

Rachel Macklin, a junior biology major from Tupelo, utilizes the wireless Internet connection now available in the V.B. Harrison Health Center's waiting area. A recent donation made it possible for the Health Center to install two desktop computers and the wireless hub for use by waiting students.

Webmasters Put Camp Experience to Work

This summer, a total of thirty-eight university personnel attended two week-long webmaster camps sponsored by the Provost's Office and conducted by the Office of Information Technology. For one participant, it was all part of a new start in life.

"When the camp took place, I had just arrived in Oxford and started my job as Web Services Librarian," recalls Debra Riley-Huff of the J.D. Williams Library. "The camp helped me understand the climate on campus in terms of development and



Janna Montgomery, Robby Seitz, Chip Wade, and Anil Vinjamur (l-r) consult during an XML exercise.

attitude toward the Web. I am really happy the administration has made a major commitment to the university's Web presence, because it's often the first point of contact many people have with our organization, and we want it to be a professional, positive experience for them."

According to another camp participant, the focus on improving the UM Web site was greatly needed.

"There has been no consistency in quality and content across the various sites in the Ole Miss domain," observes Bob Plants in the School of Education. "The idea of encouraging better coordination among UM Web sites was overdue, and I thought the organization and support around the camp were very helpful to the departments represented there."

Sessions at the camp focused on Web design and accessibility, software packages such as Macromedia Dreamweaver and Adobe Photoshop, and tools like XML, RSS, and podcasting.

"Although we were only able to skim the surface of these topics, I learned enough basics to start building a new Web site for us," comments Susan Barclay at the University Counseling Center. "It has been a huge undertaking, but I'm enjoying the process."

Barclay reports the Center's new Web site will feature the Ole Miss colors and logo, making it more identifiable as a University of Mississippi component.

"I hope to build the site in such a way that it provides a lot of information to the campus population about mental health and life adjustment issues," she explains. "I see this Web site as an adjunct to the work the other counselors and I do here, and that's why I volunteered as webmaster."

The School of Education is also re-doing its Web site and has contracted University Publications to develop the design.

"I'm not a programmer, so some of the camp material was over my head, but it helped me plan and organize what needs to be done to our site," notes Plants. "We actually have a Web team, because we felt

that having one webmaster makes you prone to losing expertise if that person leaves. I act as manager because my background is in instructional design and technology, and I work with our programmer who is responsible for entering, updating, and maintaining the content."

Riley-Huff cites several aspects of the camp which continue to impact her work.

"I was able to connect with the Campus Webmaster, and the books and software we received have been extremely helpful," she

says. "The XML demonstration got me started on a project idea, and the information from all the sessions is now part of my everyday toolbox."

According to Riley-Huff, the Library Web site is undergoing a complete overhaul that may last up to a year.

"It's a very large site, and we must do usability studies and integrate with vendor sites," she explains. "We have so many resources online, including real time reference chat, full text journal articles, archival materials, and tutorials. All this must be presented through a usable, accessible, and attractive Web site. It's quite a challenge, but it is critical to the university's academic mission."

Visit www.olemiss.edu/depts/it/webproject to learn more about the UM Web site and resources for campus webmasters.

Calling All Webmasters

Several webmaster camp participants will present a review of the enhancements they've made to their departmental Web sites on Friday, October 27, from 3:30 to 5:00 p.m. in Bondurant Auditorium 204C.

All campus webmasters, or anyone else interested in the UM Web presence, is invited to attend.

For more information, contact Campus Webmaster Robby Seitz at 915-7822 or rseitz@olemiss.edu.



Cliff Holley looks over the set of books distributed during camp.

Standard Clicker Recommended

At its September 19th meeting, the Instructional Technology Standing Committee recommended the adoption of the Interwrite PRS RF™ (radio frequency) clicker as the standard for use by UM instructors.

Clickers are small wireless devices for students that instructors can use to conduct surveys and quizzes, increasing interactivity in the classroom, especially with large groups. The technology provides instant feedback, and results can be displayed using an LCD projector.

“We want to encourage the use of a standard so students won’t have to purchase several types of clickers during their time at Ole Miss,” committee chair Penny Rice explains. “The committee carefully considered numerous brands of clickers, and the PRS RF stood out for its broad functionality, ease of use, reliability, and product support.”

The university has signed an agreement with GTCO CalComp, the company which produces the PRS RF clicker. The agreement will not prohibit faculty from using other clicker systems, but PRS RF will be the only one supported by the Faculty Technology Development Center (FTDC).

“The PRS RF clicker isn’t limited to any specific textbook or course materials,” comments Associate Provost Maurice Eftink. “Students can use them in multiple courses semester after semester. When they no longer need the technology, the Ole Miss Bookstore has agreed to buy back this particular brand of clicker at half the retail price.”

A one-hour PRS RF training session will be held Wednesday, November 1, at 9:00 a.m. in Weir 107. To register, contact the FTDC at 915-7918 or ftdc@olemiss.edu.

The FTDC will also offer one-on-one help as requested by faculty and staff. Additional learning opportunities, including online tutorials, WebEx training, and discussion groups, are available at www.gtcocalcomp.com/interwriteprsrf.htm.

The FTDC has a loaner kit of the clickers which may be checked out by faculty or staff wishing to try the technology or for one-time use.

Blackboard users can take advantage of a building block which links students to their clicker numbers. The clicker software automatically grades responses submitted as part of quizzes, tests, or homework administered with the PRS system. These grades can then be uploaded into the Blackboard gradebook as needed.

Visit www.olemiss.edu/clickers for more information.

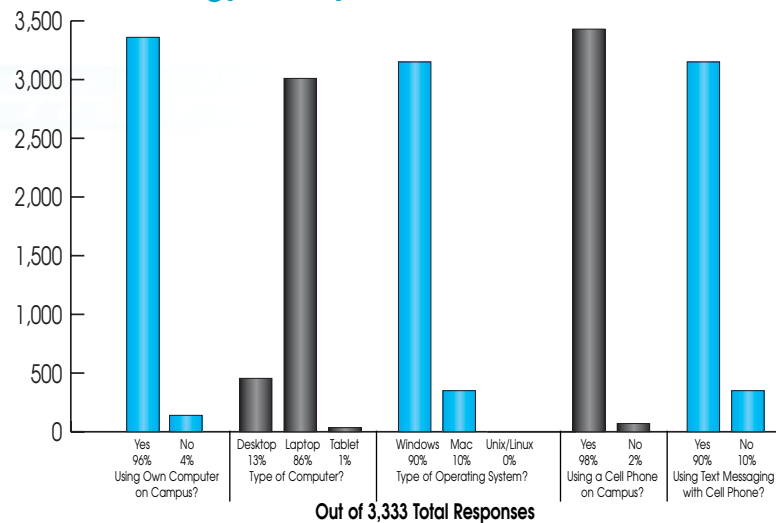


Survey Reveals Student Use of Technology

If it feels like every student on campus is talking on a cell phone these days, a recent survey conducted by the Office of Information Technology indicates that’s just about right.

Some 3,333 students who responded in August to the online survey identified themselves as campus hall residents. Of those, 98% said they are using a cell phone on campus. Ninety percent of those cell phone users employ text messaging on their phones, as students increasingly move from e-mail to more instantaneous forms of communication.

Technology Use by Residence Hall Students



The 96% of respondents who use their own computer on campus indicates that today’s college students consider ready access to such technology essential. Of those students with their own computers, 86% are using laptops, and despite the cool factor associated with Macintosh computers, 90% are using Windows-based PCs.

A Brief Taste of MERLOT

Even if you don’t drink wine, you should check out www.merlot.org.

It’s the Multimedia Educational Resource for Learning and Online Teaching, a rich repository of peer-reviewed materials covering a wide variety of academic disciplines.

MERLOT was originally developed by the California State University for Distributed Learning in 1997. It now has almost 39,000 members, including faculty, staff, students, administrators, and librarians.

It’s free to join and offers the opportunity to contribute learning materials, share online expertise, receive peer recognition, and network with others in similar fields.

The next time you’re online, take a look!

Publications and IT Celebrate a Winning Effort



M.K. Smith, Amy Evans, and Teresa McCarver (l-r) display **Online @ Ole Miss**, which recently garnered a 2006 Communication Award from the Association for Computing Machinery's Special Interest Group for University and College Computing Services (ACM SIGUCCS).

A collaborative effort between IT's McCarver and Smith and designer Evans at University Publications, **Online @ Ole Miss** placed second in the Printed Quick Reference Guides category. The competition judge described it as "clearly purposed, inviting, and visually appealing...a very effective and attractive publication."

"**Online @ Ole Miss** provides new and returning students

with an overview of IT facilities and support, recommended specifications, and tips for securing computers and data," explains McCarver, manager of the IT Helpdesk. "Check it out at www.olemiss.edu/onlineolemiss.pdf."

"This One Time, at Math Camp..."

by **Jason Hale** in the Mississippi Center for Supercomputing Research

Summer may be over, but it's not too late to attend Math Camp.

This fall the Office of Information Technology (IT) is offering hour-long math software seminars Fridays at 3:00 p.m. in Weir 107.

The first half hour of each week's presentation will focus on a specific topic related to a math package supported by IT (Mathematica, PV-Wave, IMSL, JMSL, and Matlab). We'll then have thirty minutes to answer questions or discuss other math/stats issues.

Faculty and students are invited to attend. We can

provide proof of attendance if instructors would like to offer extra credit to encourage students to attend.

The spring schedule is under construction but will include a separate weekly series focusing on statistics packages such as SAS and SPSS. Please e-mail assist@olemiss.edu to suggest a topic or volunteer as a presenter if you are an instructor or graduate student.

Visit www.mcsr.olemiss.edu/mathcamp.html for the current schedule and more information. Come join us and make some memories, so one day you, too, can say, "This one time, at Math Camp...."

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which eliminates the need to copy and deliver these materials to committee members."

Sadana notes the 85 cases initiated online thus far is a marked increase over the handful of cases seen annually in past years.

"I think faculty members are liberated to pay more attention to this issue," observes Hall. "As academics, we spend a lot of time on curricular revision and creating

better syllabi, but the single most important thing we can quickly do to improve education is ensure students do the appropriate work to earn the grades they receive."

Faculty that use SafeAssignment this fall are invited to provide feedback to Hall at 915-5317 or lwhall@olemiss.edu.

For information on how to use the program, contact the Faculty Technology Development Center (FTDC) at 915-7918 or ftdc@olemiss.edu.

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