Study

Can Classroom Capture Boost Retention Rates?

- By [Linda L Briggs](#)
- 10/17/07

Results from an initial study by a professor at Coppin State University in Baltimore indicate that class capture technology that allows students to view lectures online after the fact can improve course retention rates and grades.

Chris Brittan-Powell, a psychology professor at Coppin State, developed the study to see whether using technology from Tegrity helped student grades and retention in his courses over a semester. Tegrity's Campus software can make lectures available at any time to students by automatically capturing, storing and indexing each class for replay over the Internet.

Brittan-Powell stressed that the data are preliminary, since they focused on a single course; Coppin State may expand the study to have a broader, university-wide focus. "But [Tegrity] does seem to have a big impact on retention," he said. "I didn't think the correlation with grades would be as strong as it ended up being."

Like many colleges whose populations include working students, Coppin State would like to improve retention numbers for many classes; drop rates can average around 30 percent for some courses. In the study, Brittan-Powell found that his face to face classes with no recorded lectures offered after the fact averaged a 71 percent retention rate; when he offered lectures in class and online via Tegrity, that boosted the retention rate to 83 percent, in effect nearly cutting the drop rate in half.

Brittan-Powell compared face to face classes both with and without classroom capture to evaluate its impact on grades as well. He found that students in face to face classes that used Tegrity as an enhancement received slightly better grades than those in classes not using Tegrity. That's probably because with face to face classes, he speculated, students receive the benefit of both live and online resources. Students in classes that used Tegrity for distance learning tools scored about the same grades as those from Brittan-Powell's proximate classes.

The professor undertook the study because, he said, he was curious and somewhat skeptical about the benefits of class capture technology in general. Coppin State, an urban residential

liberal arts university with some 4,000 students, has used Tegrity as a class capture tool in conjunction with its content management system, Blackboard, since 2005. This spring, Coppin State had 76 courses taught with Tegrity, and 41 instructors recorded at least some of their lectures with the product.

One often asked question regarding offering recorded lectures online after the fact is the affect on attendance in the classroom. However, Brittan-Powell's study showed that classroom attendance in capture-enhanced courses either stayed the same or increased. "We thought that there would be a ... negative effect on attendance," Brittan-Powell admitted. "But perhaps it goes along with retention." He said that students were more encouraged to continue to take a class after missing a lecture, since they could catch it online later and were thus likely to fall behind. And, he emphasized, the study seemed to show that students "don't decide to blow off class just because, 'Oh, I can get on Tegrity.'"

He stressed, however, that the study participants were self-selecting in that those with more flexible schedules probably tend to choose his face to face classes in the first place, for example, and thus are able to maintain better attendance rates.

Brittan-Powell checked the usage rates of recorded lectures at different times and found that a popular time for viewing classes was around 2 a.m. He speculated that classroom capture helped students trying to balance work, family, and other pressures. They were better able to do so with the addition of online lectures, which in turn enhanced attendance, retention, and grades.

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Linda L. Briggs is a freelance writer based in San Diego, Calif.