

Riverside Community College



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Higher education



Riverside, California



200,000+ students and residents, 1,376 faculty

Riverside Community College mitigates the national nursing shortage using Mediasite.

The Riverside Community College Instructional Media Center has been in existence since the college's inception in 1916. The department's digital library opened its doors and now serves more than 200,000 people on five campuses each year. The library offers services ranging from closed captioning to audio/visual equipment to satellite down-linking to video conferencing. The Digital Library has three high technology rooms, which can be scheduled for school district use in support of instructional programs.

Challenge

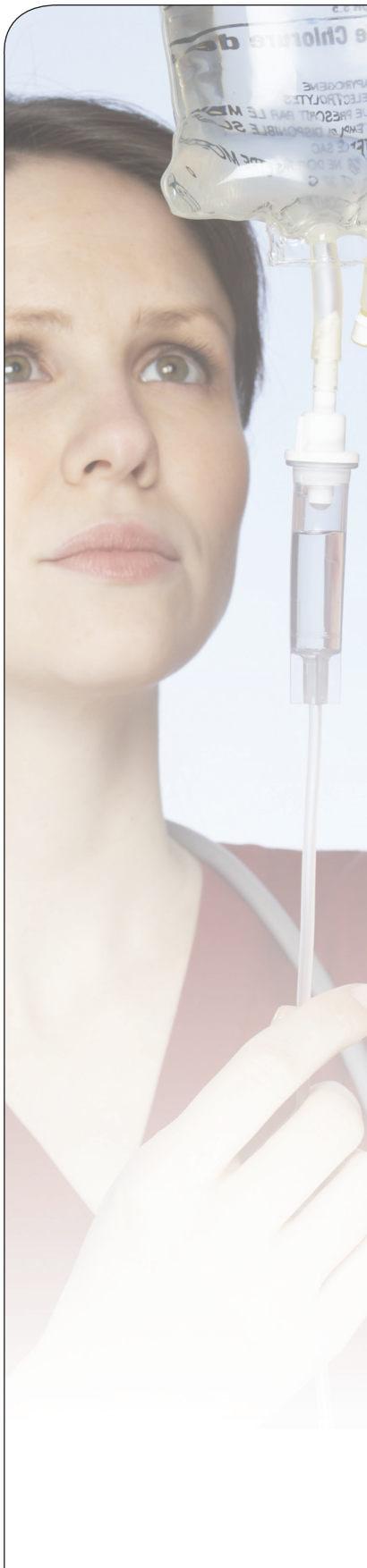
Stephen Ashby has been the multimedia operations specialist at Riverside Community College's Instructional Media Center Digital Library for more than six years. In this role, he coordinates the district's video conferencing, streaming media and instructional equipment.

In late 2004, campus technology decision makers sought a way to boost the college's nursing school enrollment. Although more than 500 students apply annually, the classrooms could only hold 60 students each. Even more pressing is the critical shortage of nurses needed in today's aging society. "We sought a way to digitally expand the classroom by allowing students to learn in their homes. We also wanted to reach out to 'would be' students who are work-at-home moms or individuals in the workforce who needed to learn at their leisure," Ashby said. "Ten to 15 percent of classes within the district consist of current nursing students or students who are taking courses to get into nursing school – and we believe this ratio will increase."

Ashby undertook a three-month technology search in which he evaluated eight rich media solutions that would accommodate the school's distance learners, especially nursing students. A primary concern was purchasing technology that would allow instructors to teach without impeding their instruction.

Solution

Ashby selected Mediasite as the school's platform for online lectures. He appreciated how Mediasite gave instructors the freedom to continue teaching as they always had. Mediasite also rose to the top of the list for its versatility. The solution allowed for the integration of several types of media instructors required for effective teaching, such as document cameras. Polling features made it possible to test students on their knowledge of the presentation material. Additionally, because Mediasite requires a fairly low bandwidth, students with dial-up Internet connections



did not have to update their home computing systems to enroll in classes. Because Mediasite presentations are based on the Windows' media platform, and can also be played by Mac users, the community college could reach a wide base of students. "We were pleased that the Mediasite solution was designed to suit students in their current environment – whatever that might be," Ashby said.

Because Ashby's team sought Mediasite for its ability to serve more nursing students, thereby helping decrease the national nursing shortage, Riverside Community College received a federal Health Resources and Services Administration grant to purchase its first Mediasite system. The success of the initial program drew the attention of the state of California Chancellor's office who granted the school capacity building funding for additional Mediasite purchases.

Generally, instructors are responsible for creating Mediasite content for the students to view. However, in some nursing classes, students create and capture presentations about diversity awareness that other students and faculty can then watch.

"It is an extremely useful product and Sonic Foundry's tech support is among the best in terms of responsiveness and product knowledge," said Ashby. "We brainstormed with Sonic Foundry about a hearing-impaired student we have in our curriculum and the next thing we knew, they had integrated captioning into the product. We needed to be able to track attendance and they created a report manager. They addressed our needs quickly into their future releases."

Result

Ashby captures approximately 12 lectures per week. Although he does not conduct ROI measurement studies, he reported that during the college's first semester using Mediasite, the 60-student nursing course increased enrollment by 12 students. By its second semester, the department gained an additional 10 students. This semester, 18 more nursing students enrolled. "Our nursing department calls our Mediasite courses the 'PJs program,' because their students can learn while in their pajamas," said Ashby.

In the near future, Ashby intends to use Mediasite for faculty development and HR training for new employees. "Mediasite helped us address our desire to expand our student population – especially our nursing students. Yet we have not pushed our system as far as we'd like, and that's a good thing," Ashby explained. "We have a ways to go – in terms of the number of applications we can implement. The Ben Clark Training Center in Riverside is a part of our district. They train police, fire and emergency teams throughout Southern California. I look forward to helping them discover how Mediasite can work for them."

Benefits

- Digitally expanded the classroom to increase student enrollment
- Required no change to the way instructors normally teach
- Accessibility for students in all computing environments as well as closed captioning for the hearing impaired