

eLearning Experts Attend Fourth Annual Meeting

The South Region hosted the fourth annual meeting of the Tennessee Valley eLearning Consortium (TVEC) on March 16, in one of its experimental learning environments. The consortium—a collection of online-education experts from local colleges, universities, and businesses—met to discuss trends and recent developments in eLearning.

Founded in 2008, the consortium was created out of a necessity for communication between academia and private industry on the subject of online-education.

Mark Lumb, a member of the DAU faculty and one of the group's founders, summarized the consortium as “an innovative, regional forum aimed at bringing eLearning practitioners together to share ideas, experiences, and innovations.”

This year's meeting focused predominantly on the growing role of online-education in academia and business. According to one of the conference participants, “Within the state of Alabama, online courses have increased over 900 percent since 1997.”

Despite the growth in the popularity of online-education, it has not been free of problems. Many of the conference attendees mentioned that the greatest challenge to the advancement of their eLearning programs is, in fact, human nature. Several cited difficulties in connecting senior-level leaders in academia with the technological expectations of their students.

Al Barnes, the DAU-South Region director of program development, even went so far as to forecast that “online schools will continue to experience a significant growth in enrollment, eventually surpassing the demand for traditional on-campus programs.”

Another item of discussion centered on the ever popular topic of “cheating” in the electronic classroom. Many participants offered a wide array

of solutions to the problem including “personal data challenges,” or questions generated from existing public records based on the exam taker's identity.



Jim McCullough, Dean, South Region, served as the opening speaker for the event, and strongly encouraged the participants to “continue to share good ideas, lessons learned, best practices, and in general learn from each other so as to improve eLearning as a whole, even after this meeting is finished.”

The event also featured a candid discussion with guest speaker Cathy Dickens, the principal assistant responsible for contracting at Redstone Arsenal in Huntsville, Ala. Many event participants found Ms. Dickens' remarks insightful regarding future partnerships and relationships with DoD, particularly DAU.

Marshall Eubanks, Associate Dean for Academics, also led an active discussion on the effectiveness of educators. The participants were very engaged and shared a number of techniques and processes that many thought would be useful in their organizations. **Luis Ramirez**, from the DAU Global Learning Technology Center concluded the event sharing information about the Teaching and Learning Lab, the development of NEXUS, and the future of DAU's Learning Management System.

Today, membership in the group of eLearning pioneers has grown to include over a dozen colleges, universities, or education-related enterprises. Participants include: Alabama Agricultural and Mechanical University, ASTD-North Alabama Chapter, Athens State University, Columbia College, Defense Acquisition University, J.F. Drake Technical College, Northeast Alabama Community College, Northwest Shoals Community College, Oakwood University, Tec-Masters, Inc., the U.S. Army, the University of Alabama in Huntsville, the University of North Alabama, and Wallace State Community College.

Senior Service College Fellows Assemble for Gettysburg Leadership Experience

Fellows from all three Senior Service College Fellowship sites—Capital and Northeast, South, and Midwest Regions—joined by faculty members from Defense Systems Management College (DSMC)-School of Program Managers, participated in the annual capstone Gettysburg Leadership Experience May 10–12. Dr. Jim Helis, chairman, Department of National Security and Strategy, U.S. Army War College, stood on Little Round Top (facing the fellows), and described the events of July 2, 1863. Throughout the Gettysburg experience, there were presentations, thought-provoking questions, and discussion focused on leadership, including leader development, decision-making, succession planning, intent, logistics, and acquisition. These topics were posed so these emerging leaders could consider the challenges and lessons applicable in today's environment. The Gettysburg Battlefield Staff Ride also afforded the fellows one last opportunity to come together as an SSCF enterprise and reflect upon the past 10 months of leadership and acquisition training.

