The College of Pharmacy has undertaken a sophisticated telecommunications project that incorporates video recording technology with website applications. By partnering three innovative technology systems, TANDBERG, Ensemble and Apple, the College has made advances in its use of education technology that greatly enhances student learning, improves instruction and creates a high-quality video product for public distribution.

“Our integrated system is unique on the UGA campus. I know of no other unit that uses a system such as ours to convert course content to a website, but it’s an application that’s becoming an emerging trend. Our students are tech savvy and appreciate our advanced technology applications,” said Sarah Jones, who heads the College’s Millikan Educational Resources Center (MERC) and manages the videoconferencing technology that transmits classroom lectures to pharmacy students at teaching sites around the state. “We now operate one of the largest video conferencing networks at UGA, and come in second, behind Georgia Tech, as the state’s largest user of TANDBERG technology.”

In fact, TANDBERG recently nominated the College of Pharmacy for the 2009 Campus Technology Innovators award for recognition in Campus Technology’s August issue. The call for nominations sought “exemplary colleges and universities, their visionary technology project leadership, and their innovative vendor partners who have deployed extraordinary campus technology solutions to campus challenge.”

The College entered the field of video technology nearly 20 years ago when it transmitted its first interactive distance learning program to the Medical College of Georgia through the Georgia State Administrative and Medical Systems (GSAMS). In 2005 the College replaced the discontinued GSAMS equipment with the TANDBERG high-definition teleconferencing system, adding cameras and recording devices to every classroom and conference room.

Last spring, in conjunction with the College’s Division of Nontraditional Education and Outreach, the College received a merit-based Learning and Technology grant from the UGA Center for Teaching and Learning. The grant led to the purchase of the TANDBERG Content Server, which allows lectures and presentations to be recorded as they are occurring.

Need more information about the College and its programs?
Check out our website at www.rx.uga.edu.
“Since we were already heavily invested in TANDBERG equipment, we consulted with TANDBERG about a system that would suit our combined needs for downloadable, on-demand educational offerings. The result was a one-of-a-kind integrated system designed by TANDBERG specifically for the College of Pharmacy, using Ensemble video and Apple Podcast Producer,” said Jones.

**Video Content Management**

Ensemble Video, she explained, is a video content management software system that allows users to manage the recorded videos on their media servers and within their own computing environment. The integrated technology system has the capability to monitor and record all classroom lectures and continuing education programs and publish the captured content for viewing on the College’s website.

“We have unlimited ability to capture any lecture at any time, monitor the content of any recording, and publish it on our website. As many as five lectures can be recorded simultaneously,” she said.

The immediate value of this advanced technology for students, she noted, is the ability to review lectures again and again, whether on computers in the MERC or on personal laptops. Faculty can request that their lectures be recorded and converted to the website for viewing, and students must have approved authorization to download the password-protected web content. So far some 200 lectures have been hosted on the Ensemble server since last fall.

“It’s like having our own institutional You Tube site,” Jones said, crediting Jeanne Prine, the College’s webmaster, with developing the new designated web page and incorporating it into the College’s website, complete with links to all available videos. “We categorize each video by class year and provide a thumbnail description of the course. Students open the video as a file on their computer.”

In addition the system allows faculty to pre-record short lectures for students to view prior to class. Students appreciate the on-demand learning opportunities, Jones added. They can review lectures in advance so that class time can be devoted more to active learning and in-depth case-based discussion.

“Those faculty who have pre-recorded lectures note that their students have been very receptive to viewing the enhanced lecture materials,” said Jones.

When the MERC prepares to move into the new Pharmacy South addition this summer, Jones will oversee the videoconferencing systems in both pharmacy buildings via remote access from a central control room.

“The integration of Ensemble Video with our TANDBERG videoconferencing workflow makes it easier to manage video content that gets distributed to multiple websites and viewing applications,” said Jones. “With this new infrastructure, we are poised to handle the expected increase of video-to-web applications in the future.”

**Continuing Education Component**

The second component of the TANDBERG integration relates primarily to continuing education programming and involves the Apple Podcast Producer Automation Software. With podcasting comes the ability to take a recorded video lecture, edit it, brand it with the College logo and credit sequences, and then distribute it freely in the public domain.

“This editing ability produces a much more polished program, which then can be uploaded to our continuing education website or published on iTunes U, a site specific to universities,” said Brinkley Warren, the digital media professional in the Division of Nontraditional Education and Outreach.

“The ability to promote our continuing education programs on iTunes U is a way to attract adult learners who may have never considered UGA as an option for professional development. Because of the popularity of iTunes, iPods and iPhones, some of our outreach videos have already been downloaded more than 10,000 times by working professionals around the country.”

“We’re at the cutting edge of distance learning,” he added. “This integration of the videoconferencing systems with online distribution platforms makes the production process much more efficient, and helps us create greater exposure for our programs.”

Sarah Jones monitors the new videoconferencing system from the convenience of her desk.