Is there a Podcast in your classroom?
Professor cites benefits of technology enhanced learning

RANDALL B. DUNHAM is chair of the management and human resources department and Keenan A. Bennett Chair in the University of Wisconsin-Madison School of Business. He is also faculty director of CIBER and a key member of the Executive MBA program as professor and coordinator of the international study trip. The recipient of numerous awards and grants, Dunham has authored more than 40 journal articles, six books and computer software including the award winning The Manager’s Workshop. Current research focuses on organizational change and management issues in cross cultural boundaries. He has consulted to over 50 schools of business from 15 countries on the effective use of instructional technology and has provided management consulting and executive development services to a wide range of business organizations. A fellow of the American Psychological Association, Dunham has a PhD from the University of Illinois.

Dunham described Podcasting as “a way to deliver content to a broader range of students through the use of technology.”

He considers Podcasting “an emerging methodology that can improve the effectiveness and efficiency of learning.”

What sets Podcasts apart from online content is that its not necessary to have access to the Internet. “Podcasts are anytime, anyplace you have a digital device or a computer where you have previously downloaded the Podcast. It’s pretty easy.”

Audio Podcasts are the most common and the least complex for an instructor to create. An ‘enhanced’ Podcast is audio combined with changing still images such as photos and documents, and full video with interviews, narrated images, video vignettes of case studies. Movie clips can also be incorporated along with music that sets the tone or wakes up the class.

Why Podcast? “You are committed to the learning of your students and you don’t care how they learn. You care that they learn and that they learn efficiently,” said Dunham who insists he is not a tech expert. “What I am is an educator who cares about learning and I’ve been willing to suffer through the good, the bad and the ugly (of technology) to get to the good.”

The applications of a Podcast are varied. Podcasts can be used to complement a course or deliver the entire course. Holding up an iPod, Dunham said, “My entire semester is on here: the executive MBA and my undergraduate class and the University of Hawaii course I taught last summer. And I’ve got 4 gigabytes left for music.”

“A Podcast is …
an audio or video recording posted on a website that can be downloaded to a personal computer or a digital audio player and replayed at any time.

The term comes from Apple’s iPod and broadcasting; however, use is not limited to the iPod. Postings can be accessed through a variety of software and hardware.

“I n non-tech terms, Podcasting is a way to eat your cake and have it too -- or a way to make a onetime presentation and serve it again and again long after the lights have gone out and everyone has left the building. “Podcasts allow for true anytime/anyplace learning,” said Randall B. Dunham, addressing a faculty audience at the Robert Reynolds Lecture/International Executive Roundtable.

He advised faculty not to worry about making the best Podcast in the world. “Just be sure it’s something you really want to do and then do it.”
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A potential downside to Podcasts is that they can lead to a drop in classroom attendance. “I record all my lectures and post them the same day,” said Dunham. “If students want to blow off the class they can. But I give them three reasons not to.

- “I go out of my way to make the class of value. Students know that the availability of the Podcast helps them to review, reinforce and better master the material.
- “If attendance drops below normal levels, I will quit publishing the Podcasts.
- “I evaluate students’ participation.

In a class of 32 students, I know them, know when they’re there, when they’re not there. I make reasonably good eye contact in class so they think I’m looking at them all the time and they believe I know them even better than I do.”

Students appreciate being able to tune in whenever, wherever they want. As one student said in a survey, “It breaks down barriers as to where I can learn.”

There will be times when a student has to cut class because of a job interview or sickness. “I trust the student to make the appropriate judgment without concern of missing out on what has been presented in class that day. On those occasions, the student can plug into the classroom via the Podcast.”

Dunham admits that every once in a while he’ll have a day where “it’s three minutes before class and there are only five people sitting there. I get nervous. I take empty chairs personally.”

But he wouldn’t stop Podcasting. “I’m competing for students’ time and attention and I want it. I want to engage them, I want to focus them and I want them to learn my stuff. So that’s part of how I think about Podcasting.”

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**To Podcast or not to Podcast**

**Questions faculty should ask before deciding**

- Will the use of this technology in this particular manner help to engage students in the content?
- Will it stimulate them so that their brains start sailing and motivate them to pay attention to the material, learn the material, and care about the material?
- Will it cause them to focus on the important knowledge- and application-based issues?
- Will it facilitate both short-term and long-term learning?
- Will it therefore aid retention?
- Will it make the learning process fun?

“Learning should be challenging, tough and exciting,” said Dunham. “But if it’s not fun we’re not going to keep coming back for more when we have a choice of coming back or not coming back.”