At a November 6 awards ceremony, held during the annual international conference of the Sloan Consortium in Orlando, the University of Central Florida was presented with the first-ever Ralph E. Gomory Award for Quality Online Education.

Gomory, who recently retired as chairman of the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation, initiated the Sloan Foundation’s support of online learning. Over more than a decade, the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation provided $80 million in grants to explore and develop the theory and practice of online education. UCF is a recent recipient of a $650,000 Sloan Foundation grant titled “Targets of Opportunity,” which aims to accelerate the integration of online, regional campus and graduate programs to serve the region.

The Gomory Award for Quality Online Education was presented to UCF in recognition of UCF’s achievement in demonstrating “in a quantitative manner, a commitment to continuous improvement of the quality of its online learning programs using the Sloan–C ‘Pillars’ of access, learning effectiveness, cost effectiveness, student satisfaction and faculty satisfaction.” The Gomory Award is based upon the innovative nature of the quantitative metrics used to assess quality, as well as the demonstration of continuous quality improvement based upon those metrics.

This award recognized the culture of evidence UCF has developed to guide and sustain the Online@UCF initiative, as well as the leading research and assessment work done by Chuck Dziuban and Patsy Moskal of the Research Initiative for Teaching Effectiveness (RITE), and the quantitative information management systems developed by the Center for Distributed Learning (CDL).

More Work, Less Hassle — Thanks to Adobe Connect

Last fall, UCF entered into a partnership with Adobe Systems to offer hosted licenses for Adobe Connect to UCF faculty and staff. We would like to use this opportunity to answer some common questions about the program and how it is used at UCF.

Q. What is Adobe Connect?
A. Adobe Connect is a program in Adobe’s Acrobat line of software that allows users to collaborate over the Internet. You can share your computer screen; use whiteboards; text, audio and video chat; and several other functions, all through your browser window. You also can easily upload Flash and PowerPoint files to share with others in your meeting. Adobe describes it as “high impact web conferencing.” The idea is to bring web tools together in one place to allow you to do more work with less hassle.

— continued on page 4
IT&R to Phase Out ITV Network

The two-way interactive instructional television network that links UCF classrooms, faculty and students to students in regional campus classrooms will be phased out by the end of the spring 2010 semester.

ITV classes are currently offered at UCF Cocoa, Daytona Beach, Ocala, Palm Bay, Sanford/Lake Mary, South Lake, South Orlando, Valencia Osceola and Valencia West, in addition to the Orlando campus.

Created in the 1990s, these “video classes” were originally broadcast to remote sites using microwave transmission. But over the years, that process evolved into dedicated connections to each site and, more recently, using the university’s IP data network.

ITV is a synchronous delivery system: Students must attend class at the time it is offered and at the location where they are registered. Faculty and students see and hear one another, and students at any participating location can be seen and heard by all other students. Student assignments are sent back and forth via courier or e-mail.

ITV classes meet Monday through Thursday, and most originate from Orlando, although there are a few “regional-to-regional” classes, which originate from Cocoa, Daytona or another regional site. Classes connect nine minutes before actual class time to allow for any necessary trouble-shooting.

As technology has evolved, so too has student and faculty experiences with and expectations from video-based education. New technologies make interaction more fluid in a wider variety of settings. The next-generation of ITV course delivery will be based on online, asynchronous (anytime, anywhere) delivery. New, asynchronous video delivery technologies will be phased in as a replacement for the decommissioned ITV network.

Check It Out

The self-check unit is a self-service library terminal that allows students, employees and other UCF Library patrons to check out books, VHS tapes and other general collection items themselves, rather than having to stand in line so a library employee can check out the materials for them.

The self-service unit is located across from the Circulation Desk, just at the entrance to Infusion, the Library’s coffee shop. The terminal has the ability to print or e-mail a receipt. Receipts for materials checked out include due dates and identify if the patron has any library items on hold, overdue items or money due to the library.

The self-check terminal was acquired by the UCF Library to relieve congestion at the Circulation Desk and to allow patrons the option of checking out materials themselves as a matter of convenience or privacy.

Student Allison Matos uses the library’s new self-check terminal to check out her selection of books. This unit allows all library patrons to save time by skipping the lines and checking out their materials themselves. The self-checkout station is near the entrance to the Infusion coffee shop and across from the Circulation Desk.
Computer Services Adds New Hosting Space

Computer Services & Telecommunications (CS&T) is responsible for managing all core university server systems, and for providing a secure and stable computing environment for the campus.

CS&T has recently added data center space to provide shared server hosting for on-campus departments and colleges. CS&T is making this space available to help departments better manage their technology needs and to assist with the university’s ongoing sustainability program.

CS&T is relying heavily on server virtualization, which allows several servers to run on just one physical machine. The benefits of virtualization are energy savings and reduced space and cooling needs.

The data center offers many advantages for server hosting, which include:

- **Schedule** — The hosting space is designed to function on a 24-hour, 7-day-a-week, 365-day-per-year basis.

- **Conditioned power** — Power systems in the hosting space are designed to run uninterrupted, even in the unlikely event of a total power outage. All servers are fed with conditioned Uninterruptible Power Supply (UPS) power that will provide a smooth transition to power provided by an on-site diesel generator.

- **Monitoring** — System availability is monitored 24 hours a day, seven days a week by the operations staff. Monitoring includes “eyes and hands” service to all clients for emergency situations that require additional assistance (i.e., servers, applications, back-up processes, disaster recovery).

- **Precision environment** — All air is circulated and filtered to remove dust and contaminants. The server rooms offer triple redundant cooling via the campus chilled water loop (primary), rooftop chillers and, if necessary, a portable chiller truck. An advanced FM200 fire-suppression system is in place. All server rooms contain raised floors with below-rack cable trays for easy cable routing.

- **Server backup and recovery** — Servers in the hosting space are backed up to disk and tape. Tapes are stored securely both on and off site. Data center operators provide 24/7/365 availability for backup and recovery service.

- **Server configuration services** — CS&T can provide needs assessment and requirements development for servers. We can specify server systems based on your needs and generate vendor quotes based on your requirements. All orders can then be placed through the UCF Computer Store. Configuration assistance for Dell, Sun and Apple servers is provided.

- **Server monitoring in data center** — Monitoring includes service for emergency situations that require additional assistance (i.e., see Monitoring). Systems are classified as priority and non-priority for determining service levels. Priority systems are monitored 24/7/365 by operations staff. Non-priority systems are monitored by software but not actively monitored by staff. In addition, systems can receive two types of monitoring service, which include standard, where data center operators monitor server availability, and custom (advanced), where customers can monitor their own systems with customized tools.

HAVE QUESTIONS? WANT MORE INFORMATION?
Contact Computer Services & Telecommunications at:
407.823.2711
or
cst.ucf.edu
Q. Is this a replacement for Webcourses?  
A. Adobe Connect is not being offered as a replacement for any teaching modality currently in use at UCF. It is not the same kind of Learning Management System as is provided by Blackboard. However, Connect can be used to supplement both online and face-to-face classes in a variety of ways. For instance, Rudy McDaniel in the Department of Digital Media used Connect with Webcourses in his information architecture graduate class to assist students with programming assignments outside of the class meeting time. Connect allowed McDaniel to review assignments with his students and allowed students to collaborate to solve their problems. Anyone can share his/her computer screen, so instead of describing a problem, it can be demonstrated.

Q. Is Connect just for faculty use?  
A. Not at all! Connect is used in a variety of ways, including help desk support, recruiting and other types of collaboration, when face-to-face doesn’t always work or isn’t feasible. Feel free to contact us with questions as to how Connect might fit into your workflow or save your office or department travel costs.

Q. What do I need to use Connect?  
A. Adobe Connect uses Flash technology. At a minimum, you need a modern web browser with a current version of Flash installed. Flash is one of the most popular browser plugins and is already installed on most computers. There is a small applet that may download to run the meeting full screen and allow for screen sharing, but that’s it. While you can use a webcam to share audio and video, it is not required to participate in or host a meeting. A broadband Internet connection is recommended, but dial up can be used with a loss of some functions (especially audio and video). Adobe Connect can even be used over a wireless connection (with audio and video).

Q. How does hosted licensing work?  
A. We are using Adobe’s own servers to host our meetings. When you purchase a license, you are given a link to log into your account on Adobe’s servers. As a licensed user, you can create as many meetings as you’d like, and as many as 100 people can participate in each meeting. Your participants do not need to have a Connect account of their own so you can set the permissions for your meeting rooms to allow in anyone or only the people you invite. As a requirement of your license, though, you must be logged into the meeting in order for it to run; you cannot start a meeting and then log out. If you do, the meeting ends for everyone when you leave, whether they have a Connect account or not. Licenses cannot be purchased for a department or organization; a single user’s name must be associated with the license and his/her information will be tied to that account.

Q. How do I get a license?  
A. Licenses can be purchased through the UCF Computer Store. The cost is $250 for a one-year license. UCF’s licenses renew on September 1 of each year.

Q. How do I get started?  
A. One of the advantages of Connect is its large community of enthusiastic users ready to share their knowledge of the system. For instance, the Adobe Connect Users Group (http://connectusers.com) has many resources for those new to Connect as well as those who have been using it for a while. We strongly encourage everyone interested in Connect to visit the website for examples of best practices, applications for its use, troubleshooting tips, etc. There are also training sessions, offered by Clarix every Monday, which are free to UCF faculty and staff.

Q. What about technical support?  
A. The Office of Instructional Resources provides on-campus direct support for Adobe Connect. Feel free to send Don Merritt an e-mail (dmerritt@mail.ucf.edu) with any questions or concerns you might have about the program. He is also available by appointment to help you set up your account and to adapt the meeting space to your particular needs. With advance notice, demos of the technology or group training sessions are also available.

We look forward to helping our users become familiar with this exciting technology.

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**CONNECT TO A FREE TRIAL**

Adobe offers free 30-day trials of the Connect software through its Website. However, please note these trial accounts are managed solely by Adobe. The information and work done in these trial accounts cannot be moved to a UCF license purchased later. These trial accounts are best used to become familiar with the technology and not for actual applications.

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**Editor’s Note:**

The UCF Textbook Purchase Program article in the Information Technologies & Resources’ February issue should have indicated that students who are awarded financial aid must either purchase their textbooks and educational supplies using Short Term Advance, their own money, or delay these purchases until their disbursements are received.

In addition, Curt Sawyer’s quote should have read: “This program is exciting, as it allows students relying on financial aid an additional opportunity to purchase their textbooks in a timely manner, through a greatly simplified process.”

We apologize for any confusion.