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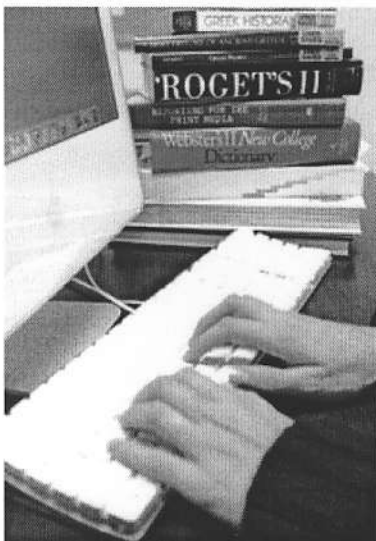
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## Internet courses not in vogue at BU

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Melea Burke/Lariat Staff

With more than 2 million students enrolled in online courses nationally this fall, online learning is fast becoming a more convenient way to earn a college degree. Baylor remains committed to encouraging community learning and continues not to offer online courses.

By LAUAR FRASE  
Staff writer

As more universities nationwide include online courses in their curriculum and add to the 2.3 million students enrolled in at least one online course in fall 2005, Baylor stands untouched by this online craze and is continuing to uphold its in-class, community learning appeal.

"I do think a factor in why these courses haven't developed is because of Baylor's historical valuing of having an in-class experience where you have inner change among the various students in the class in real time," said Dr. James Bennighof, vice provost for academic affairs and policy. "Part of the interest in having a residential campus has to do with people learning in a community."

While Bennighof emphasized the necessary role of face-to-face interaction among professors and students, he said he also sees the possible advantages that online courses could offer students.

"Some of the possible advantages of these courses would be time flexibility -- you can do it when you can fit it in -- and in some cases, location flexibility if you're one course short of graduation and you want to get married and get a job, and he's in Alaska," Bennighof said.

But, he said he doesn't see the likelihood of Baylor implementing most courses online.

"It's kind of hard to do tennis online," Bennighof said.

Colorado Springs, Colo., senior Philip Catalano said he wouldn't mind rolling out of bed to sit at his computer to attend class.

"I think some classes would be better if taught over the Internet," Catalano said. "Sometimes if a professor doesn't do a good job of teaching the material, I think it would be better to just be at home instead of going to class and spend the same amount of time teaching it to yourself."

On the positive side, Catalano noted the importance of social interaction outside of students' homes.

"You get to meet more people when you go to class," Catalano said. "When you meet people in your classes, you can get help from them when you have a problem."

While Catalano said that sometimes it's better to teach yourself than attend class, as an English major, Fort Worth senior Allison Sands appreciates the need for class discussions.

"Interaction with professors and other students can always enhance your understanding and comprehension of what you're learning because different viewpoints are shared on the subject," Sands said. "Especially in English courses, discussion of the material helps you better understand it and better prepare you for your career."

But for freshman-level required courses, Sands said she wouldn't mind if they were offered online.

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Thoughts being able to attend class online in pajamas appeals to many students, but it may prove a challenge for most professors.

"Teachers don't have good face-to-face contact with the students that most or all of our teacher's value," Bennighof said. "It would be a big difference in the experience for both students and faculty."

Dr. Linda Walker-Kennedy, an English professor, believes online courses could subtract from the learning experience.

"Although I think that Internet courses could be a wonderful opportunity for some non-traditional students and for certain types of courses, I have found in my 38 years of teaching college students that most students understanding literature better and are more likely to be inspired if I am available to interact with them in the classroom," Walker-Kennedy said.

The closest thing to an online course at Baylor is correspondence courses. These courses are offered to current or former Baylor students attaining a degree with courses such as English, history or political science.

However, most students are only allowed to take correspondence courses during the summer months if they are going home, or in special circumstances during the school year, such as a student only needs one more course requirement to graduate, Jan Holmes, officer manager and project coordinator for the Arts and Sciences dean's office, said.

While Baylor has opted to refrain from adding online courses at this time, several universities in the Big 12 have already jumped on board the online course trend.

Texas Tech University offers about 100 different Outreach and Distance Learning courses available to undergraduates ranging from accounting to music to psychology. Among the variety of courses, the university offers the most courses in math and English.

Texas A&M University tops Texas Tech University with more than 100 distance education and web-based section courses available to undergraduates.

Bennighof isn't worried about competition mounting between Big 12 schools because one university offers online courses and another doesn't.

"It just goes back to what the student is trying to get out of the education," Bennighof said. "The value of the community experience is a very high one, and I would be hesitant to sacrifice that in general."

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