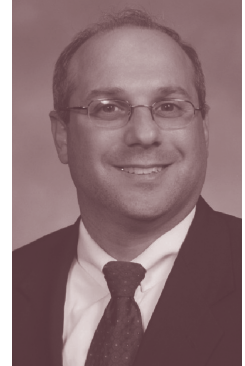


January 2007

A Moment for Grove City College

This Moment for Grove City College is about a single subject – technology – specifically, what has the College done in the past and what is it doing today in this vital area. We define technology as the development of computer literacy through the implementation of the software and hardware required to support the learning process.

First a confession: like many folks of my age (61), I was slow to appreciate the information and technology revolution and was certainly slow to learn how to “get on board”! I have two very distinct memories from the early to mid 1980s. My first one is that of a very senior Pittsburgh bank officer talking about having just seen the first-ever demonstration of an Automated Teller Machine (ATM). He thought it was the wave of the future. The next is when I was President of the Pittsburgh Applied Research Corporation and my controller was a whiz kid with a Harvard MBA. He talked incessantly about computers and the revolution that was to come (as he saw it). Well, being a history major (love of the past) and a lawyer (love of precedent, also love of past) did not make me much of a futurist. Accordingly, I thought little of this wave of the future. Well, it wasn't a wave – it was a tsunami! And it has revolutionized our world and our learning techniques. It has also created enormous enterprise value on the commercial side as it has transformed productivity – an important element of operating outcomes.



*Vice President-CIO
Dr. Vince DiStasi '88*

The College got on board early, first under the leadership of the Board of Trustees and President Charles MacKenzie and then under Presidents Jerry Combee and John Moore. And we got on board in a highly informed way. So, here's a little history before we move to what we are doing today.

At one time, the only computers on campus were housed in the basement of Buhl Library. Students had to wait in line for their turn on a machine with what amounted to simple programming capability. With no campus-wide network, all data transferred to a single mainframe for storage. In order to run administrative applications, local programmers personalized already existing code to meet the College's needs.

The Weir C. Ketter Technological Learning Center, or “TLC,” was dedicated on May 18, 1984, with President MacKenzie presiding. It was a \$4 million structure featuring “state-of-the-art educational technology manufactured by the Digital Equipment Corporation for use in computer courses, word processing and a wide variety of other subjects.” At the time, it made Grove City a forerunner in the field of computer-assisted instruction.

When the TLC opened, it housed 108 Interactive Video Information System (IVIS) machines, which were at the front edge of multi-media computing because they used video and graphics to deliver educational materials. Serving the IVIS machines were two mainframes housed in the TLC. Some administrative offices on campus had terminals for entering information, and there were some computer pods for faculty to use. Printers were scarce, and electronic messaging was rudimentary at best and on-campus only.

At that time, students had access to 12 rows of computers in the TLC on a first-come, first-served basis. The hallway would be full of students waiting to get onto a terminal. There was one printer room. Students would print their work and have it handed to them at the door. Students had a paper quota, and if they went over their quota, they paid for each extra sheet.

In 1994, led by President Combee, Grove City College was one of the first institutions in the nation to distribute portable laptop computers to all full-time faculty and students on campus. The named “Grove City College Information Technology Initiative” began with three goals:

- To provide a level of convenience for students
- To integrate computer technology into courses
- To better prepare students for their professions

The technical specifications of those first-ever computers (I list them below for those who follow these things with interest) and the ones used today are an interesting contrast:

- 1994 – Compaq Contura 4/25c with a 25MHz processor, 4MB RAM, 120 MB hard drive, floppy disc, color display and a 2,400-baud modem
- 2006 – HP Compaq tablet PC tc 4200 with a 2.0 GHz processor, 1GB RAM, 80 GB hard drive, external DVD RW drive, XGA TFT display, high speed 56K modem and integrated wireless networking plus an all-in-one color printer/scanner/copier

In sum, few schools in America today are as technologically enabled and course-integrated as our College. Join me now for a conversation with our full-time Vice President-Chief Information Officer (CIO) Dr. Vince Distasi '88 (pictured above).

Question 1: What impact has technology had on students' day-to-day business experience?

Dr. Distasi: One of the stated goals of the Information Technology Initiative was to provide a level of convenience for the students, which in 1994 focused on the availability of computers for academic use. Today that convenience is an integral part of how students conduct their day-to-day business with the College.

Probably the most notable campus experience today is how we conduct registration for courses. As many alumni can remember, registration initially was conducted by receiving a rather large package that contained the courses listings and a bubble sheet form in campus mail. We then filled out the bubble sheet, had it signed by our adviser and handed it into the Registrar's Office. Days later, we received our schedule via campus mail and then made any adjustments to it using additional forms and authorized signatures; hopefully the result was getting all the courses we wanted, as there was no way to know ahead of time if a class section was closed. At the beginning of each semester, students and faculty would then gather in the IM Room to wait in long lines to make last-minute changes, pay bills or say hello while waiting to talk to some of our favorite professors.

Today, the process of registering for, adding and dropping courses is completely online and can be done from any location where a student has a network connection and access to the Internet through the myGCC portal. What typically took weeks is now done in less than one hour. For the past few semesters, 80 percent of students in each class (i.e. freshman, sophomore, etc.) completed course registration in 45 minutes or less.

Other campus and community services are also available through the myGCC portal, including the ability to view course grades, unofficial transcripts, financial statements, financial aid awards, chapel attendance and food service menus.

Question 2: What is happening in the area of integration of technology into the curriculum?

Dr. Distasi: This is a very exciting area that continues to evolve each year with new innovations as technology becomes a seamless component of a student's education. Faculty and students use technology daily in and out of the classroom. Students bring their tablet PCs to class so they can take notes directly into their computer. For that they use a stylus pen, so what they write is then processed and stored electronically! For faculty, computers have replaced chalkboards and chalk and almost every other audio-visual aid we remember from the past. Lecture outlines no longer are handed out. Instead, faculty use PowerPoint or digital video clips instead of a film projector or television. Many faculty will connect to the Internet during class to draw upon its resources to enrich learning with pictures, scholarly articles, graphs and data analysis. And other examples abound. Many faculty use chat rooms to supplement their courses. In science labs, students use their computers to record, analyze and graph data instantaneously. Some of our liberal arts faculty members require students to submit writing projects and papers electronically. Those assignments are graded and returned to the students in the same way. In fact, grades now are entered directly into the College's computer system.

Through a Microsoft Research Grant, and in collaboration with Carnegie Mellon University, Grove City College is currently investigating the effectiveness of tablet PCs for teaching and learning through electronic textbooks and collaborative/interactive technologies. One such application, DyKnow, allows faculty members to deliver and present course material from the classroom lectern directly to their students' computers in class. Students can then take notes or experiment with the content in a variety of ways. Faculty can also give instant polls to see how successfully they are getting their points across, give quizzes, even grade a student's work and offer immediate feedback. Long after class is over, students can amazingly replay the entire class, showing every pen stroke and delivery of material in the order in which it was given. This way, they can review their notes, check their comprehension and review any topics that were unclear. It is our hope that this type of collaborative, engaging and immersive environment will provide faculty with new ways to deliver richer content and provide each student with additional ways to understand and interact with the material.

Most exciting of all, technology has made it possible for the College to teach courses overseas in "real time." Last semester, 12 mechanical engineering students in France took two courses live from Grove City College while it was simultaneously being taught to a roomful of students right here on campus. By using DyKnow and other communication technologies, faculty were able to write on their tablet PCs and information was projected immediately to France. As if that were not enough, a conference phone enabled the students abroad to hear the lecture and ask questions along with their peers on campus.

Adaptive technology such as the tablet PC and supporting software enables our faculty and students to collect, create, interact and reference information like never before.

Question 3: In what ways has technology impacted student life outside academics?

Dr. Distasi: One area that is not thought of as high-tech is the new ID card. How can the simple ID card of the past with the Grove City College seal, black and white pictures and ID numbers be so technologically advanced? Today, the GCC OneCard includes library usage, cafeteria meal plans, declining balance accounts in the Gedunk, door access to residence halls and academic buildings and, perhaps most important, tracking Chapel attendance!

We will continue to add more services to the OneCard as we make that technology as ubiquitous as the mobile computer program.

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Thank you Dr. DiStasi. A coming advancement is the addition of an Alumni On-Line Community. This free service will provide many communications options to students and alumni. Information will be made available soon.

As is certainly evident, our alma mater has taken the lead and remained at the forefront of the technology revolution in higher education. We intend to continue our leadership in this area and **that is a promise.**

Yours for Grove City College,



Richard G. Jewell '67, J.D.
President