

eCampus

Troy University a worldwide leader in distance learning

When 15 bankers launched the first cohort in an innovative new joint venture between Troy University and Louisiana State University's Graduate School of Banking several years ago, little did they realize Troy's eCampus would play a pivotal role in saving their lives.

By chance, four of the 15 were assigned a class project but the group became so close-knit they remained together, completing TROY's executive master of business administration degree in August. Their first face-to-face meeting came just the night before summer commencement.

Three weeks later, two EMBA's would find themselves faced with the tough choice of evacuating their homes and families. Hurricane Katrina forced Shane Loper and Michael Croal to evacuate their bank, family and home in Gulfport,



MS, to Tallahassee, FL, where Hancock Bank had other branch locations.

Unable to find hotel accommodations, Loper was able to move his family in at Susan Payne Turner's home during the devastating hurricane. Turner works for Wakulla Bank in Crawfordville, FL. The fourth member of the group, Michelle A. Alexander, works for the Bank of Botetourt in Buchanan, VA, and kept tabs on her fellow EMBA's.

"While the eCampus provides a learning platform that grants students

the ability to work from home, it simultaneously provides unique opportunities to make lasting friendships and connections with individuals from different states and countries," Loper said.

That's obviously one of the more powerful reasons TROY's eCampus has been so successful. The relationships that are built cross state and national boundaries and spread learning across 13 time zones and 62 sites.

"Troy University was a pioneer in distance learning," said Dr. Susan Aldridge, vice chancellor of University College and eCampus. "We've been able to stay on the leading edge of course design and delivery, combined with quality academic programs."

In fact, the University's distance learning programs span more than a half century. In 1955, the University established its first branch campus at



Catrina L. Johnson
First-year MBA student
Montgomery, AL

I am an account executive for a local NBC affiliate. My days at work are long and stressful and I'm a

single parent ... Troy University

enables me to be there for my child. I work all day; but after I relax a little and put my child to bed, I am online in class. I never thought that I would be able to earn an MBA as a parent, but Troy University makes it all possible.



Keesha Johnson
B.S. in Resource
Management student
Tikrit, Iraq

I have been with Troy University since 2003 (thanks to eArmyU) and I am six classes shy of

earning my degree. The staff members that I dealt with and remember (Donna Darling and Stacey Warren) upon my enrollment were very friendly. They made my selection of TROY much easier. Because it is an online program, the understanding, dedication and assistance of the staff and instructors are essential for students not located near any of the campuses.

Fort Rucker with just 20 enrollments.

Today, TROY's eCampus is an award-winning program and has set the University as a national and worldwide leader in distance-learning delivery. Five terms per year are offered to students around the world, as well as traditional college students who mix and match their in-class and online courses to suit their schedules.

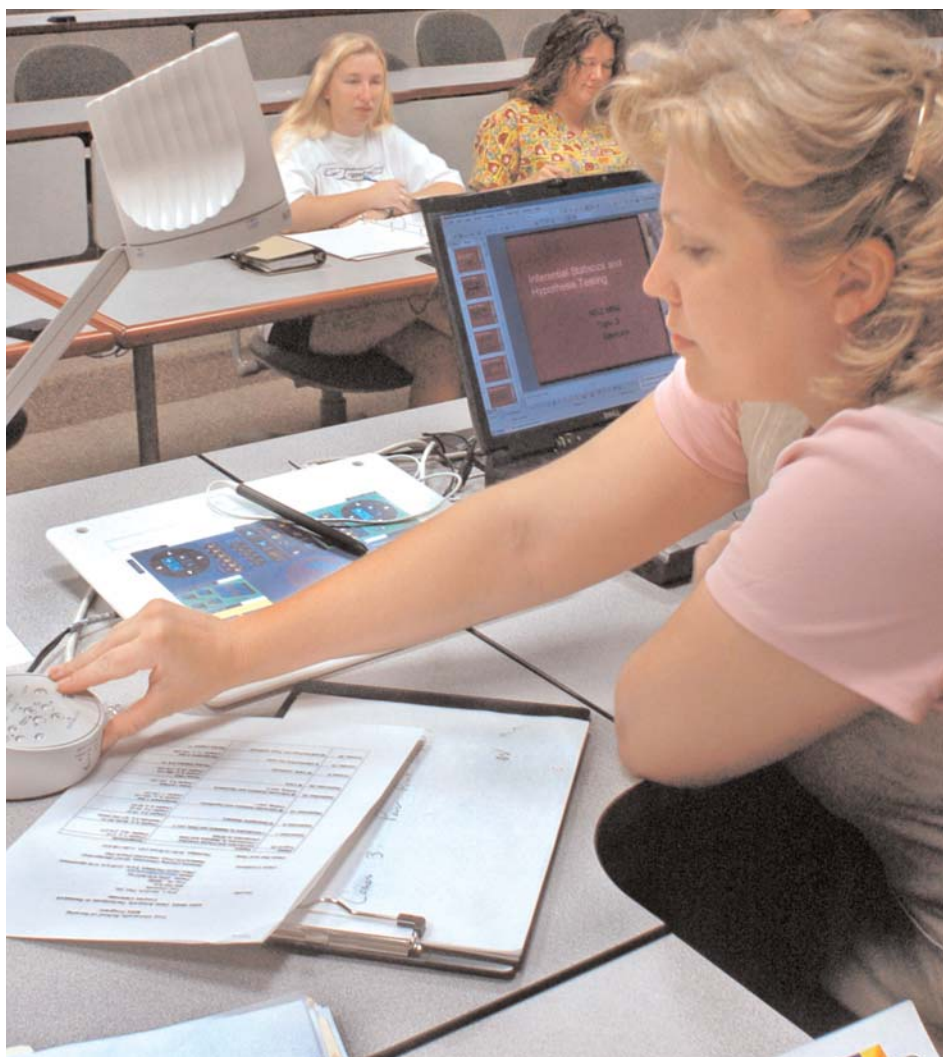
"Early distance-learning programs simply consisted of classes at remote locations, sometimes using innovative scheduling that met the needs of working professionals in military and civilian communities," said Dr. Sallie Johnson, dean of distance learning.

Nearly 70,000 people have taken advantage of TROY courses, Johnson said. In the last year alone, 48 percent of Troy University students were distance-learning students and accounted for 34 percent of the University's total enrollments. Another nine percent of the total enrollments came from eArmyU, the University's partnership with the Department of Defense. TROY is eArmyU's second-largest on-line provider of education. The University's eCampus enrollments make it the second largest state university distance-learning provider in the nation.

Today, fifteen undergraduate degree programs, nine graduate programs and various academic and continuing education courses are available through TROY's eCampus.

"The eCampus allows TROY students, regardless of location or time zone, to take quality distance-learning courses or programs

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Dr. Amy Spurlock reads the overhead video projector for her class on "Data Analysis Techniques in Research." Spurlock teaches students via video conferencing, as well as students in the lab at Wallace Hall on the Troy Campus.



Jeremy H. Smith
Criminal Justice
student
Forward Operating
Base Salerno

... What an environment to be taking a college course! But, I know there is life after the military. I transferred to TROY because it was completely online, which is the only way I could take a course. With many hours of college credits, it was time I focused on a degree and criminal justice seemed very interesting ... Taking the course has been great ... It takes my mind away from this over here – even if it's just for a moment.



Renee M. Butler
TROY graduate, data-
base manager
Maxwell AFB -
Gunter Annex, AL

I thought it was a challenge - returning to school after 27 years ... The truth of the matter is, it didn't hurt as much as I thought. The professors and staff are exceptional. My online class proved to be very informative and interesting. I was given the opportunity to: express my opinions and share them, the freedom to comment and converse with my classmates (without feeling "dumb"), interact with my instructor and to do all of this on "my time."



Technological advances such as the use of streaming video have given distance learning more of a classroom atmosphere for students.

through a centralized process,” Johnson said.

That means ease of scheduling and class offerings for students wherever they might be.

“I started the program while we lived in Japan, I continued when we moved to Arizona, and I’m still in the same program without any disruptions now that we’re located in the D.C. area,” said Jackie Manasterli, a master of science student in international relations.

Manasterli isn’t new to the higher education game – she has a bachelor’s degree in English literature, a law degree and a master of legal letters degree. A practicing tax attorney for 10 years, she became a full-time, stay-at-home mom to care for her three children.

“Shortly after 9/11 happened, I started more than ever wanting to better understand what was going on in the world. After I told my husband I wish I could do it all over again, and go into international relations like he did, rather than tax law, his reply was ‘Why not get a master’s online with TROY.’ I’m now in my sixth of 10 classes with TROY and hope to finish in the summer or fall of 2006,” she said.

Manasterli could be typical of the students that eCampus is attracting, Aldridge said, and supporting those students has led to innovations.

“Research finds no significant difference between distance-learning students and traditional face-to-face learning,” Aldridge said. “Students and faculty must have the resources available to help them succeed in an online environment.”

Those resources now include “24/7” support: Online book ordering, a 24/7 technical help desk, extensive online library resources, a 24/7 reference librarian, web-based registration and advisement, transcript review and online student records, plus streaming video and audio clips in course delivery.

“We have replicated online the traditional support services



**Scott L. Denson
B.S. in Resource
Management student
and Sergeant Major,
U.S. Army
Iraq/Fort Hood, Texas**

I have served in Iraq for the last 10 months and will be returning to Fort Hood at the end of September. The first thing that drew me to TROY was a bumper sticker that I saw. After learning more about the eArmyU program, I knew that I wanted to find a school that was going to accept most of my current credits since I had already completed three years of college ... After reviewing the schools that were participating, I noticed that TROY was on a military installation - Fort Benning, Ga. That was a big factor for me because I knew that they would be there for the soldier, and they would work with soldiers and try in every way to help soldiers earn their degrees while serving.



**Ken Roblee
Associate Professor
of Mathematics
Troy, AL**

... I am teaching my first on-line math course: Applied Discrete

Mathematics ... I have only been teaching for a short time, but it has been a wonderful experience for me ... I have a weekly "electronic office hour" which is just a designated day and time each week where each student and myself can go to the course site and go into a chat room. Here, they can ask me any question related to the class and this creates interaction between faculty and student as well as between the students ... The most satisfying part about teaching online (like any teaching) is the moment of "ah-ha" for the student, that is, the moment when the material clicks. I see many of these teaching online, just as in a "real classroom" setting.

that traditional college students would receive,” Aldridge said.

Innovations such as interactive video sessions and Blackboard, the eCampus’ interactive messaging system and chat rooms are putting students in touch with their professors and classmates.

Also included in eCampus are the TROY e-mail system, the toll-free Information Call Center, online chat assistance, informative Web pages, adaptive needs services, online book services including electronic books, a large eLibrary database, a specialized library search tool called Helot, online student orientation, expanded financial aid services, a writing center, online tutoring services and experienced faculty and staff.

“This summer I took two online speech classes with Dr. (Jim) Vickrey, the head of speech/communications at TROY ... His help, advice and encouragement have been so valuable in helping me with career direction,” said Penny Joyner Waddell, an instructor of fundamentals of speech at Gwinnett Technical College in Lawrenceville, Ga.

“Realizing how busy he must be as a professor at Troy University, I was so impressed with the time he took to actually hear my needs and help me find ways to accomplish them. It’s been a blessing to have been mentored, taught and advised by such caring professors and I appreciate that [they] do not treat their students as numbers but as individuals,” she said.

Waddell’s eCampus experience,

eCampus offerings

Undergraduate degrees offered:

Associate of Science Degrees

- Business Administration
- Computer Science
- General Education

Bachelor of Science Degrees

- Business
- Nursing
- Sport and Fitness Management

Bachelor of Science Degrees with majors in

- Computer Science
- Criminal Justice
- History
- Management
- Nursing
- Political Science
- Psychology
- Social Science

Other Bachelor Degrees

- Registered Nurse to B.S. in Nursing (RN to BSN)
- Bachelor of Applied Science in Resources Management (BAS)

Graduate degrees offered:

- Master of Business Administration (MBA)
- Master of Criminal Justice (MSJC)
- Master of Education (MEd)
- Executive Master of Business Education (EMBA)
- Master of Human Resources Management (MSHRM)
- Master of International Relations (MSIR)
- Master of Management (MSM)
- Master of Nursing (MSN)
- Master of Public Administration (MPA)



combined with a master of post secondary education with a concentration in instructional technology completed at TROY’s Atlanta campus, has led

her toward incorporating web-enhanced teaching in her classroom at Gwinnett Technical College.

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Raking in the recognition

Troy University is widely recognized as a worldwide leader in distance learning. Listed below are some of the honors received by the eCampus programs and staff.

- Dr. Sallie Johnson (at left), dean of distance learning, was selected by the Online Journal of Distance Learning Administration to receive the Excellence in Distance Learning Administration award in Outstanding Instructional Support.

- The Distance Learning Center has received the Golden Web Award for excellence in Web Design for the years 2002,

2003 and 2004.

- Dr. Susan Aldridge, vice chancellor of University College, and Dr. Johnson spoke to participants in the 2005 China-U.S. Distance Learning Forum in Beijing, China in June. Dr. Johnson also selected as one of only three U.S. representatives to the Canadian Association for Distance Education’s annual conference.

- Dr. Aldridge was asked to co-chair a national Department of Defense Distance Learning Task Force charged with establishing quality standards for DL courses offered to military personnel.

“Students and faculty members alike have access to a 24-hour-a-day, seven-days-a-week system that helps them meet their demands,” Johnson said.

In fact, the University provides as much support to faculty members as it does on-line students.

A team of instructional designers work with faculty to take a traditional course and adapt it to the on line environment. Aldridge said portable production studios are available for faculty to video components of lectures and stream them into the internet course. The web-based library reserve desk allows students worldwide to access one-of-a-kind documents.

Added to this, the Journal for Educators Online is published by TROY, and an annual eFaculty conference is held to demonstrate new simulation models, enhancements and products to improve course delivery.

Brad Readnour, a captain in the U.S. Air Force who is enrolled at the Shaw Air Force Base campus pursuing a master of science in management degree, has seen the innovative technology work first hand. For Readnour, eCampus’ viability is essential to his degree program – with the support and thoroughness of the system, he is able to complete his degree.

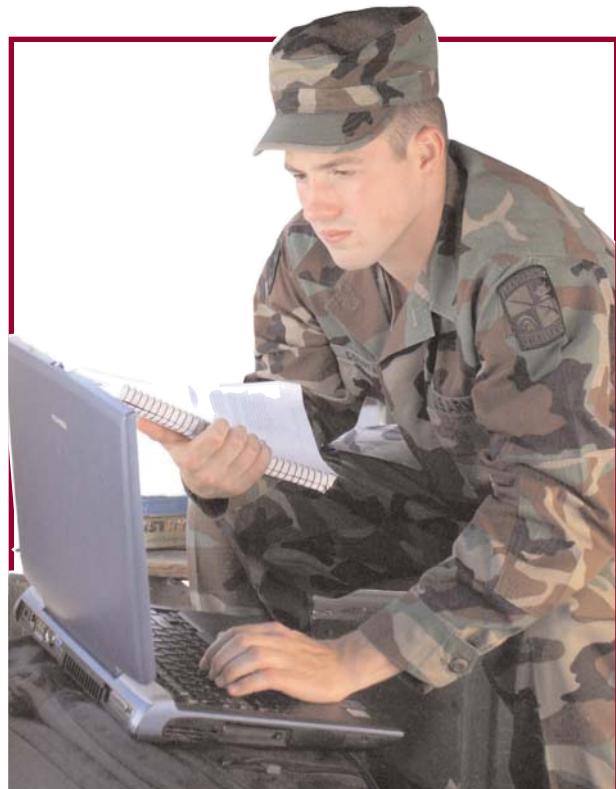
“As a member of the 9th Air Force, I deploy frequently to the Middle East in support of Operations Iraqi Freedom, Enduring Freedom and Task Force Horn of Africa. Usually I am gone between 90 and 120 days at a time when I deploy,” he said.

“If there were not alternate ways for me to continue my education online, such as TROY offers, it would be nearly impossible to progress toward my degree

completion. Because of online classes and Blackboard, I am able to continue courses while I’m deployed,” Readnour said. “Understanding professors are essential to this as well because the operation tempo does not always allow for completing course as easily as one would simply working regular hours in their normal environment. Thanks to TROY’s course flexibility, I aim to complete all requirements for this degree by May of next year.”

Readnour’s case is but one example of the “one-student-at-a-time” philosophy practiced at the University.

“Service to students and faculty are the hallmark of Troy University’s success through the eCampus or in a classroom,” Aldridge said. “University students use the



‘Laptop army’

Troy University is second-largest provider of online course delivery through the Department of Defense’s eArmyU – the Army’s education and continuing education program.

Known as the “laptop army,” the Army launched eArmyU in 2001 to offer eligible enlisted soldiers the opportunity to work toward a college degree or certificate online.

With more than 12,000 individual courses taken each year by more than 3,000 soldiers under TROY’s partnership, the University is a leader in designing the program that serves military personnel across the globe. TROY’s 18,511 eArmyU enrollments last year accounted for about 9 percent of the University’s total enrollments.

Through the University, soldiers take courses leading to a bachelor’s degree while they are deployed and are based in Korea, Afghanistan, Iraq, Japan, Europe and at military installations across the United States.

internet more than the general population and distance-learning courses offer traditional students as well as working professionals the opportunity to take courses conveniently with flexible schedules.

“Geography is no longer a barrier to pursuing an education,” she said.

Lusk is a university relations coordinator.



Dr. Susan Aldridge speaks during the 2005 China-America Distance Learning Forum in Beijing, China in June.